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# VILLAGE SERMONS;

OR,

SIXTY-FIVE PLAIN AND SHORT

## DISCOURSES

ON THE

PRINCIPAL DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL;

INTENDED FOR THE USE OF

FAMILIES, SUNDAY-SCHOOLS,

OR

COMPANIES

ASSEMBLED FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN  
COUNTRY VILLAGES.

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BY GEORGE BURDER.

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FIVE VOLUMES IN TWO.

VOL. II

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*Come, let us go forth into the Field; let us lodge in the Villages.*

SOL. SONG.

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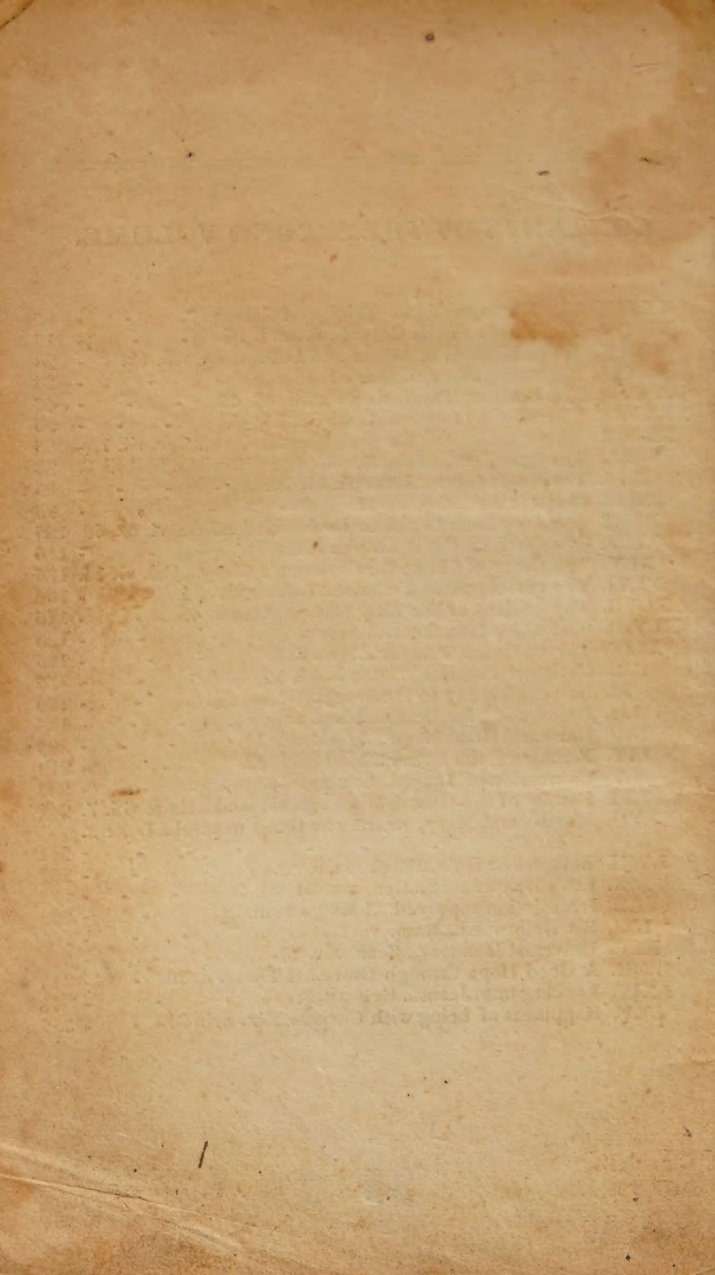


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## SERMON XXXIII.

### THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

1 JOHN, v. 7.....*For there are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.*

ALL religion supposes the worship of a God ; and therefore, in all worship, the first thing to be considered is, *who* that God is ; or what sort of a being is to be worshipped. The Heathens worshipped a great many gods ; as many as thirty thousand have been mentioned : But all Christians admit that there is but ONE only, the living and true God. Now all the knowledge we have of God is from the Scriptures. If God had not been pleased to give us the Bible, we should to this day have been worshipping idols, as the former inhabitants of this country did, and as many millions of Pagans now do. Reason alone, never yet led any people to the right knowledge of God, nor ever will. The learned Greeks and wise Romans knew no more of God than the savage Indians. The knowledge of God which Noah and his sons had, was gradually lost and corrupted. But God made himself known in a particular manner to Abraham, and to his posterity the Jews : among whom the knowledge of the true God was preserved till the time of Christ, and now by his Gospel, this knowledge is given to us, and to all who receive the Scriptures as the word of God.

Now, the same Scriptures which assures us there is but *one* God, speak of him under the three names of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* ; and our text plainly declares that *these three are one*. This doctrine is generally called the doctrine of the *Trinity*, which signifies *Tri-Unity*, or three in one. This doctrine has been thought by most Christians to be very plainly revealed in the word of God ; nevertheless there were some persons of old, and there are some now, who dispute or deny it ; and these people are called



*Arians*, or *Socinians*; and some of them now call themselves *Unitarians*. We ought to be much on our guard against those who would rob us of "the faith once delivered to the saints," and of which this is an eminent part. For you will please to observe that those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity seldom stop there; they generally deny also the atonement of Jesus Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, and so leave us very little of the Gospel to believe. Indeed many who begin their apostasy in the denial of the Trinity, complete it in becoming downright Infidels and Atheists. As a right notion of God is connected with all true faith and holy practice, it is of great consequence for us to be well established in this doctrine. It shall therefore be our present business to prove, that

*In the Unity of the Godhead there are three divine Persons.*

It may be proper to remark that, with respect to this doctrine, it is not necessary that we should be able fully to *explain* it, or show how the three divine persons subsist. This is, and must be, a *mystery*. There are many people, in this age of reason, as they call it, who dislike and reject every thing mysterious; but this arises entirely from their pride. There are many mysteries in nature; we are mysteries to ourselves. We know little of the nature of our own bodies, and still less of our souls. Is it any wonder then that we should know little of God, or that the divine nature should be mysterious to us? Let us beware of pride, especially the pride of our understandings. This pride ruined the angels who fell. It ruined our first parents; and it will ruin us eternally, if it be suffered to prevail. As we should never have known any thing of God but by the Bible, let us be content to take the Bible account of God, which is, indeed, his own account of himself. And let us remember what our Saviour said to his disciples, when he discovered the workings of pride among them, Matt. xviii. 3. Having set a child in the midst of them, he said, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." A little child is obliged to take upon trust, what his infant capacity cannot yet comprehend; and it is the office of Christian faith, to take God at his word.

I would also remark, that in our reception of this Scripture doctrine, we are not bound to adopt the mode of expression used or enforced by any particular divines or churches. Some good men, in their attempts to explain the doctrine, have rather perplexed it. Some good men have said, that "the Father is the fountain of Deity"—that "he communicated his whole essence to the Son"—that "the Son is entirely begotten of the Father," and that he is "very God of every God." As these expressions are only private interpretations of a Bible truth, we are at liberty to admit or reject them, as they appear to be scriptural or not.

Now let us proceed to a brief proof of the doctrine advanced, viz. *In the Unity of the Godhead there are three divine persons.* By *Godhead* we mean the divine nature. We maintain the *Unity* of the godhead; that there is but one God; yet we assert, as our text does, that there are *three* in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that these three are one.\* There is but one God. It is impossible there should be more. Reason itself shews that there cannot be more than one being, who is *first*. God is the *first cause* of all being, and we cannot conceive of two or more *first causes*. God is also a self-sufficient being; he existed alone; he can do every thing of himself; he needs not the help of other beings. "Now, if there were two such beings, they could do no more than one could do; if they could, then one could not be *self-sufficient* and *all-sufficient*; each of them could not be of God, if they could want or receive any help from one another. There cannot therefore be two Gods; for if one is *all-sufficient*, the other would be needless and useless." It is the great doctrine of Scripture that there is one God, Isa. xlv. 5. "I am the LORD, and there is none else; there is no God beside me." Deut. vi. 4. "Hear, O Israel; the LORD our God is one LORD." Mark xii. 32. "There is one God;

\* Perhaps you will be told that this verse is not found in some ancient manuscripts of the New Testament, but has been added by the Trinitarians. But we are assured by men of the first learning and credibility, that it is found in the most ancient copies; and whoever examines will find that the sense of the chapter is not complete without it. But the truth of the doctrine does not depend on a sense, as we shall plainly prove.



and there is none other but he. Jer. xxiii. 24. "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord." 1 Kings viii. 39. "For thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of Men." This is the God alone who ought to be worshipped. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

The adversaries of this doctrine call themselves *Unitarians*, by which they mean to intimate that their belief of only one God, and insinuate that we, who believe the Trinity, admit of more than one God. But we deny the charge. We maintain, as strongly as they that there is only one God; and we think it perfectly consistent with this belief to acknowledge three Persons in the Godhead. We allow that the word *persons* is not found in Scripture, and may convey an idea somewhat too gross. But this is owing to the poverty of our language, which does not furnish us with a better term. And we think it justifiable, because *personal properties* and *personal acts* are ascribed to each of the divine three. But we contend not for the word, but the thing. It is enough for us to say with the text "there are THREE that bear record in heaven, the FATHER, the WORD, and the HOLY GHOST."

That there is a *plurality* in the Deity is evident from the Old Testament. This, you know, was written in *Hebrew*; and, the name which is generally translated by the English word *God*, is in the Hebrew, *plural*, and signifies more than one. It is *Elohim*, which is in the plural number, as *Gods* would be in English: and this word is often joined with the Hebrew word JEHOVAH, which is translated LORD; and whenever you find the word *Lord* in capital letters thus (LORD) it means *Jehovah*, a name which signifies the essence of God, "He who was, and is, and is to come." Now there is a passage in *Deut.* vi. 4, where you have both these names, and which fully proves the doctrine of the Trinity. "Hear O Israel: The LORD our GOD is one LORD." If the word *Lord* and the word *God* signified just the same, the passage would be nonsense; it would be only saying, the Lord is LORD, or one is one: But the meaning is, JEHOVAH, our *Elohim*, our covenant God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is one Jehovah. He is one in essence, though three in person. The Jews are unwilling to own that this is the meaning of



the names of God in Hebrew, but it is entirely owing to their hatred to Jesus Christ. If any are converted to Christianity, as some have been they own it immediately.\* Thus *John Xeres*, a converted Jew about 70 years ago, when he published his reasons for becoming a Christian, says, "The Christians confess Jesus to be God; and it is this that makes us look upon the Gospels as books that overturn the very principles of religion, the truth of which is built upon this article, the *Unity of God*. In this argument lies the strength of what you object against in the Christian religion." There he undertakes to prove, that the unity of God is not such as he once understood it to be, in unity of *Person* but of *Essence*, under which more persons than one are comprehended; and the first proof he offers, is that of the name of *Elohim*. Why else, says he, is that frequent mention of *God* by means of the plural number; as in Gen i. 1, where the word *Elohim*, which is rendered *God*, is of the plural number, though annexed to a verb of the singular number; which demonstrates that there are several persons partaking of the same divine nature and essence."

This *plurality* is restricted to a *Trinity* of persons, namely three, whose names we have in the text. And here observe, that the names, *Father*, *Word* or *Son*, and *Spirit*, are not intended to describe the manner in which the three divine persons *subsist*, but the manner in which they *act*: but what they are *in themselves* (that is not revealed) not what they are *to us*, according to the respective offices which they have been pleased to assume in the redemption of man. And therefore, though one of the names of office may seem greater than the rest; yet, this does not denote that the person who bears the name is greater than the other. The name of the *Father* may seem greater than that of the *Son*, or of the *Spirit*; and Christ speaks of the Father as greater than he; and the Spirit as well as the Son is "sent;" but as these are names of *office*, and not of *essence*, they only describe the nature of the office

\* See an excellent treatise, entitled *The Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity, proved by above an hundred short and clear Arguments in the Words of Scripture*, by Mr. Jones, Rector of Pluckley, &c. printed for Rivington.

assumed, which may be greater or less ; but as to the essence there is no difference nor inequality ; but as it is expressed in the Athanasian Creed—" In this Trinity, none is afore nor after other : none is greater or less than another ; but the whole three persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal. The Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one : the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal."

Our further proof of the Trinity shall be from the history of man's creation—the application of the name of the Deity to each divine Person distinctly—the institution of baptism ; and the apostolical blessing.

In the history of man's creation we find these words, Gen. i. 29, " And GOD said, let us make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness." Surely this expression denotes that there is a plurality of persons in the divine nature, or why should it be used ? Some tell us it is only an accommodation to the mode of speaking used by kings, who in their public acts say *we* and *us*. But this is ridiculous ; for kings had no existence before the creation of man. Besides, kings use this phrase out of modesty, or to signify the concurrence of their council ; but " who hath known the mind of the LORD, or who hath been his counsellor ?" Rom. xi. 34. In like manner we find the Lord God saying, after man had fallen, Gen. iii. 22, " Behold the man is become like ONE OF US." Some think this was spoken *ironically*, in allusion to Satan's promise, when he tempted our first parents to eat of the forbidden tree. " Ye shall be as God, &c." Others think it refers to the covenant, in which *one* of the divine persons had engaged to become *man*, in order to redeem man. Be this as it may, the expression plainly prove a plurality, such as is more plainly expressed, John i. 1. " In the beginning was the WORD," (the very name used for Christ in the text) " and the Word was with God, and the WORD was God." But again, The name of God is applied to each of the divine persons distinctly. That the *Father* is called *God* need not be proved. *Jesus Christ* is also called *God* in many places of Scripture. Thomas said to him, John xx. 28, " My LORD, and my GOD." St. Paul says, Rom. ix. 5, " He is GOD over all, blessed for ever." St. John says, 1 John

v. 20, "Jesus Christ is the TRUE GOD, and eternal life." The Psalmist says, that the Israelites in the wilderness "tempted and provoked THE MOST HIGH GOD;" and St. Paul, speaking of the same thing says, "they tempted Christ;" consequently he is "the most high God." Psalm lxxviii. 56. and 1 Cor. x. 9. Isaiah had a vision, concerning which he says, "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts," Isaiah vi. 6. St. John, speaking of that vision says, "these things said Esaias, when he saw his (CHRIST'S) glory, and spake of him," John xii. 41; from whence it follows, that Jesus is the LORD of HOSTS. And let it be carefully observed, that the name LORD or JEHOVAH, which signifies the essence of God, is never, upon any occasion, given to a creature. Yet this name is given to Jesus Christ, as in the text last mentioned, and also in the following, Jer. xxiii. 6, "This is the name where he shall be called, the LORD (that is JEHOVAH) our righteousness." Now, who is the righteousness of believers? Every Christian knows, that "Christ is made unto us—righteousness." And in Isaiah xliii. "I, even I, am the Lord, and besides me there is no Saviour." But we know who alone is the Saviour of the world, even "our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." But unless he were God as well as man, he could be no Saviour; for Jehovah says there is no Saviour besides himself.\* Passing by many more texts for want of room, we shall mention but one more in proof of our Lord's divinity. Our Saviour has graciously promised his presence with all his people whenever they assemble together. See Matt. xviii. 20, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Now how is it possible for Christ to be present in all the thousands of places where Christians are assembled, unless he be the true God?

In like manner we might shew, that the peculiar names

\* If the Reader wishes to see more proofs of this kind, let him consult the following places, Isaiah viii. 13, 14, with 1 Peter ii. 7, 8. Is. xlv. 6, with Rev. xlii. 13. Luke i. 76, with Matt. xi. 10. 2 Cor. v. 19. John xiv. 11, Isaiah ix. 6, Rev. i. 8. 1 Kings viii. 39, with Rev. ii. 23. And as to those places in which Christ saith, The Father is greater than I, &c. they are understood as his human nature and office, or as the Creed expresses it, "inferior to the Father as touching his manhood."



of the Deity are given to the *Holy Spirit*, and that, therefore, he also is a Person, and a divine person. One out of many, may be sufficient. St. Peter reproving Ananias for the lie he had told respecting his substance, saith Acts v. 3. "*Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the HOLY GHOST?*" and, in the next verse he adds,—"*Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto GOD.*" This is a most plain and undeniable proof that the Holy Ghost is God.\*

The ordinance of *Christian baptism* affords another proof of the Trinity. In the baptism of our Lord himself, a voice from heaven said—"This is my beloved Son;" also, "the Holy Spirit descended visibly" in the manner and form of a dove, "lighting upon him," Matt. iii. 16. Here was the Trinity. The FATHER testifying to the Son, and the SPIRIT descending upon him. Hence, the primitive Christians used the saying, to any who doubted the truth of this doctrine, "Go to Jordan, and you will see the Trinity." Plainer still is this truth from the form of words appointed to be used in Christian baptism—Baptize them in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST." This is an ordinance of initiation; it stands as it were at the threshold of Christianity; so that in taking upon us this distinguishing badge of the Christian profession, we avow this great doctrine. We are baptized into the *name* of each divine Person, that is, by the *authority* of each, and into the *faith, worship, and profession* of each equally and alike, as the One God of the Christian religion. Hereby we profess the Trinity, that is one God in three Persons, in opposition to all false gods and false worship, and thereby dedicate ourselves to them, according to their personal relations; to the *Father* as our Creator, and as reconciled in Christ; to *Christ* as our Redeemer to deliver us from the guilt and power of sin; and to the *Holy Spirit* to teach, comfort, and sanctify us. This is a kind of proof of the doctrine suited to the weakest capacity. Each of the sacred Three is mentioned distinctly and by name, which certainly implies a distinction of persons; yet they are all united in the same ordinance of

\* Other proofs may be found in Acts xiii. 2, 4, 2 Tim. iii. 16, compared with 2 Pet. i. 21. 1 Cor. iii. 16, with 1 Cor. vi. 19. 1 Cor. ii. 11. 14. Psalm cxxxix. 7.

baptism, which shews their equality and unity. So that all who would renounce that sacred ordinance, may see in it a full, clear, and satisfactory proof of the Trinity.

Much the same may be said of the Apostolical benediction, 2 Cor. xiii. 14, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen." In these words St. Paul prayed for the Corinthians, and in the same words almost all Christian ministers pray for their people at the close of every public service. It is a kind of prayer to each divine person singly, expressing a desire that the people may partake of the grace of *Christ*, who is "full of grace," through whose mediation we are reconciled to God—that they may also enjoy the love of *God*, namely, of God the Father, which is the source of our whole salvation, manifested in the gift of his Son, his Spirit, and his word—and finally, that they may partake of the *Holy Ghost*, as all real Christians do in his application to their souls, of all the blessings of salvation, proceeding from the Father, and flowing to us through the Son. And thus are we continually reminded of this great truth, and led also to make a practical use of it, in seeking from each of the divine persons the peculiar blessings that each, in the economy of the covenant, has undertaken to bestow.

APPLICATION.—From what has been said, however briefly, it is sufficiently evident, that the Doctrine of the Trinity is a *scriptural* doctrine; and as such, we are bound to receive it, unless we renounce our Bibles. It is true that it is a sublime and mysterious doctrine; yet there is nothing at all in it contrary to reason. Some men make a great outcry against it. They tell us it is absolutely impossible *that there should be but one*, and that the Trinitarians must believe there are *three Gods*. In answer to this we say, we do not affirm that the *three* are *one*, in the same sense that there are *three*. They are *three* in one respect; *one* in another. We say they are *three in person; one, in essence*. We affirm that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not three Gods, but one God. We have abundantly proved from Scripture, that there are Three to whom divine names are given, divine attributes ascribed, and divine offices assigned; and we affirm, with our text, and

according to the whole tenor of Scripture, and the voice of reason too, that there are three in one. And what is there in all this absurd or contradictory? Were we to affirm that there are one, in the same respect as they are three, it would, no doubt, be a contradiction in terms; we say not that three persons are one person, or three Gods are one God; but we say that the three persons are one God. This is revealed, therefore we believe it; and though we cannot fully comprehend it, we think it becomes such weak and fallible creatures as ourselves, humbly to receive it, with other truths, as the word of God and not of man.

But it is by no means enough merely to assent to the doctrine, we ought to make a practical use of it. It is far from being a matter of speculation; it is a branch of our "most holy faith." We should be concerned not to hold this, or any other truth, in unrighteousness: and no doctrine, however true and important, will avail us, without an experience of its sanctifying power on our hearts.

Let us be concerned then as perishing sinners, to apply to each of the divine persons: to the Father, for the pardon of our sins through his infinite love and free mercy; to the Son, for an interest in his blood, righteousness and intercession; and to the Holy Spirit for his illuminating, sanctifying, quickening, and influencing comforts.

Let us adore and praise the eternal Three; the Father for his electing love, and the unspeakable gift of that love, the Lord Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son. Let us adore and praise the dear Redeemer, ascribing blessing, and honour, and glory, and praise to him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. Let us adore and praise the Holy Spirit for his gracious influences, accompanying the word of truth, whereby we knew ourselves, and felt the power of the Gospel to our salvation. Thus shall we resemble the blessed angels, who are incessantly praising the glorious Trinity, and crying "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is come."

We shall close the whole with that excellent Collect used by the Church of England on Trinity Sunday.

"Almighty and everlasting God, who hast given unto us, thy servants, grace, by the confession of a true faith, to



acknowledge the glory of the eternal TRINITY, and in the power of the divine Majesty to worship the UNITY; we beseech thee that thou wouldest keep us stedfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest One God, world without end. Amen."

## SERMON XXXIV.

### THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

ROMANS, i. 16.....*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*

**I**F we wisely consider the signs of the times, we are constrained to say, "this is a day of rebuke and blasphemy." Knowledge increases; Arts and Sciences flourish; Commerce is extended; almost every thing is in a state of improvement—but what shall we say of religion? Alas, how many among us content themselves with the name and the shadow of it, while they deny its power. How many others, still more careless, neglect even the form of godliness: while others, grown bolder in sin, are weary of the Gospel itself; dispute its truth; revile its power: and are seated in the chair of the scorner; in a word, are "ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."

Not so, that great and good man whose words we have read. He was a bold and successful minister of the Gospel. He had preached it in many countries, but hitherto had no opportunity of preaching it at Rome; but hearing that there were Christians even there, he sends them this letter, expresses his love to their souls, and his earnest desire to come and preach Christ's Gospel there. It was a great and populous city, one of the greatest in the world, and he well knew he should meet with much opposition, and perhaps be in danger of his life; yet he says, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," adding this good reason for his boldness, "for it is the power of God to salvation," to every believer, whether Jew or Gentile. Now, that it may, by the blessing of God, be so to us, let us,

I. Take a general view of the *nature* of the Gospel.

II. Consider the important *design* and *use* of it—it is “the power of God to salvation;” and then,

III. Shew that there is no reason why we should be *ashamed* of it, but rather that we ought to *glory* in it.

I. Let us take a general view of the *nature* of the Gospel. What is the Gospel? what do we mean by it? It may be feared that many who are called Christians, would be at a loss for an answer to this question. Now there are several points of view in which we may behold the Gospel. It certainly contains a history of the most remarkable and important events, especially the incarnation of the Son of God, his holy and spotless life, his amazing miracles, his excellent sermons, his bloody passion and cruel death, his resurrection from the grave, and his ascension to glory. The Gospel also contains *the purest and best system of morals* that was ever offered to the world; and would to God they were but practised? The Gospel likewise displays *the infinite perfections of God*, his holiness, justice and love especially; for “he who was in the bosom of the Father had declared him.” The Gospel demands our attention also, as it affords *a wonderful discovery of a future state* an eternal heaven and hell, in one of which, each of us must soon be fixed for ever. In all these respects the Gospel discovers and requires our serious and cordial regard.

But all this falls infinitely short of the true nature of the Gospel. The word *Gospel*, in the original signifies, *Good news*, or *Glad tidings*, as it is written in the prophet Isa. lii. 7, and quoted by St. Paul, Rom. x. 15. “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things”—observe—glad tidings of good things. This is a just description of the Gospel; never were there *things so good* as those contained in the Gospel; never were there *tidings so glad*, as those reported by the Gospel. You are to consider the Gospel as a message of mercy from God to sinners—as a declaration of his good will to lost and ruined man. Take it in Christ’s own words—“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Or, take it in the words of St. Paul, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy

of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Now you will observe in these texts, the *condition* of those, to whom these glad tidings are sent—a world of men ready to perish, and who *must* have perished if God had not sent his Son to save them. They are *sinners* whom Christ came to save. My friends, we can never rightly understand one word of the Gospel, unless we know and feel our miserable and perishing estate as sinners. In Adam we all fell. From him we derive a sinful nature. Our minds are total darkness, as to God, and the things which belong to our peace. Our hearts are disaffected to God; we shun him; we fly from him, as Adam did when he had sinned. And, as to our *lives*, they are lives of rebellion against him. Our carnal minds are "enmity against God, they are not subject to the law of God, neither can they be," till renewed by grace. And being breakers of the holy law, we are under the curse and penalty of it; obnoxious to the divine wrath, and liable, every minute, to death and damnation.

Now, do we know this; do we believe this; do we feel and lament that this is our case; and does this lead us to cry out in good earnest, "Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?" If so, we are prepared to receive the good news of the Gospel. To such persons, especially, is the word of this salvation sent. It informs them that God, in his infinite mercy to sinful man, has sent his only begotten Son to take our nature; and in this nature, and as our surety, to obey the laws which we had broken; to make an atonement, or satisfaction for sin, by his death, and so reconcile us to God. And also that he will give his Holy Spirit to his people, by whose influences, accompanying the Gospel, their minds shall be enlightened in the knowledge of the truth; they shall be enabled to believe in Jesus; to repent of their sins after a godly sort, and to become new creatures, so as to love, obey, and enjoy him here, and at length to be made perfectly happy in heaven for ever.

And is not this good news? So the first Christians thought. When Philip went down to Samaria, and "preached Christ" there, we are told "there was great joy in that city." When the Galatians first heard a Gos-



pel preached, they received him "as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus; and had it been possible, they would have plucked out their eyes, and have given them to him;" such was *the blessedness* they then enjoyed. And when the poor Heathen jailer of Philippi was brought to the saving knowledge of Christ, he "rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house." And so it will be with us, in some measure, if we are sensible of our need of Christ, and if we heartily receive this good news. If an army of rebels, subdued in war, and at the will of their conqueror, were doomed to death; would it not fill their hearts with joy to be told that the king, for the sake of his son, had freely pardoned them all, and received them to his favour, and would never more remember their offence? Or if a company of miserable prisoners, in such a place as the French bastille, or the Spanish inquisition, who had endured all the horrors of a rigorous confinement for many years, were to hear the sound of liberty and freedom, would it not gladden their very souls? Such are the "glad tidings of great joy" which the Gospel brings to this present company to-day; and such will be their effect too, if you believe to the saving of your souls.

And this, you will perceive, is a very different scheme from that of those, who tell us, that if we are but sincere, and do as well as we can, God is merciful, and we need not fear; and who make no more of Christ than a good man, who came to teach good things, and to set us a good example, and to assure us that God will accept our repentance and sincere obedience, instead of that which his law requires. Beware of this merely moral scheme; it will be poison to your souls. If Paul had taught only morality, he need not have said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." The philosophers of Rome would have made no objection to it; but it was the satisfaction of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, which they despised. The cross was the stumbling block of the Jews, and the banter of the Gentiles. But nothing deserves the name of Gospel which does not make a precious Jesus, "all in all," "the first and the last," in our whole salvation. Therefore, when the salvation began to be corrupted by false teachers, who told them they must be cir-

cumcised and keep the law of Moses, besides believing in Christ, St. Paul cried out aloud against the motley mixture of Christ's righteousness and man's righteousness; he called it *another Gospel*, and protested against it, saying, "If any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

We are now to consider,

II. The important *design* and *use* of the Gospel—it is the *power* of God unto salvation, that is, it is the powerful instrument which God employs, and makes effectual to the salvation of believing sinners.

Salvation is the grand object which God has in view in the Gospel. Salvation is a great word, but a greater thing. Nothing so great, nothing so important as the salvation of a soul that must be happy or miserable for ever. And it is sad to think that poor thoughtless mortals should ever use such a word in a light and profane manner. What is more common than to hear a person say—As I hope to be saved! And what notion have such people of salvation? They only hope that when they die "they shall not go down to hell, a place of fire and torment; but that they shall go up to heaven, to some fine unknown shining place above the skies, where they shall be free from all pain and uneasiness." Poor ignorant creatures, they have no desire to be saved from sin, neither the guilt nor the power of it; no desire to have their hearts changed, their nature refined, and their souls filled with the love of Christ. But the salvation proposed in the Gospel is great and glorious beyond description; the greatest blessing that God can bestow, or man receive. And it is by the Gospel that he conveys this blessing. Wise men in all ages have seen the need of some remedy for human nature in its miserable and fallen state. Philosophers and Lawgivers have tried their skill in vain. They were physicians of no value. The Gospel provides the only medicine for the cure of the soul, and this is effectual. It is God's power to salvation. It is the powerful mean, in the hand of the Spirit to save us from the guilt of sin, and to give us a right to heaven; and to save us from the power of sin and make us fit for heaven.

1. It is the power of God with respect to the pardon of our sins, and the justification of our persons. Without the Gospel, we could never have been sure that the great God would pardon a sinner; we could never have known upon what terms he would do it. We should never have been certain that we were actually in a state of favour. But the Gospel is a message from God himself, assuring us not only that "there is forgiveness with him," but inviting us to apply for it and accept of it. The Gospel is "the ministry of reconciliation, namely, That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." God has appointed and accepted the mediation and sacrifice of his Son, for the satisfaction of his law and justice, and making peace; so that he might not charge any sin, or inflict any punishment, upon those who believe, or receive the atonement. Upon this ground, the ministers of the Gospel, as ambassadors for Christ, pray and beseech sinners to be reconciled to God. Since satisfaction is actually made to the justice of God by the death of his Son, that he may honourably shew favour to sinners, they intreat them, by these gracious encouragements, to throw down their arms of rebellion, to submit to mercy in God's own way, and to yield themselves up to him without reserve, that everlasting peace and friendship may be established.

That this is the principal design of the text appears from the next verse. "For in the Gospel is the righteousness of God by faith, revealed to faith," the righteousness of Christ which becomes ours by faith, is revealed to be believed on, and trusted in. Now, God makes this Gospel his power to salvation. This is the doctrine which he owns and blesses. By the power of his Spirit he opens the understanding to receive it, and the heart to believe it. Thus the sinner comes to God, is accepted, and saved.

2. It is the power of God with respect to the renewing our spirit, restoring the image of God in our souls, subduing our sins, and forming us to that "holiness, without which no man can see the Lord." It was as much the design of Christ to save us from sin, as to save us from hell. We are to esteem it a precious part of his salvation, to be delivered from the slavery of the devil, and the tyrant;



ny of our native corruptions. The doctrine of "salvation, by grace, through faith," is so far from being contrary to holiness, or hurtful in good works, that it is God's powerful instrument of producing them. The Gospel of Jesus Christ contains the purest precepts in the world. The instructions of Christ to his disciples contain the noblest morality, infinitely finer than all that the Heathen sages ever knew. The Gospel also furnishes us with motives to obedience, infinitely stronger than any other. Here sin appears to be sinful indeed, especially in the agonies and sufferings of Jesus. Here holiness appears with heavenly beauty, in the character and conduct of the dear Redeemer. Here we are forcibly drawn by the love of Christ, who requires, as a proof of our love to him, that we keep his commandments. He expects all his followers to resemble him. He requires them to deny themselves and take up their cross daily: to mortify the deeds of the body; to part with sin, though as dear as a right hand or a right eye; to set their affections on things above; to be fervent in their devotions to God; to abound in every good word and work; to be honest and just in all their actions; to be charitable to the poor and needy; to visit the sick, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked; in a word, to "love our neighbour as ourselves."

Nor does the Gospel only require such holy dispositions and actions, but it enables believers to attain and perform them. By the same faith which receives Christ as our righteousness, we are united to him, (for without him we can do nothing) and by virtue of union to him we can do all things. As the branch derives virtue from the tree to bear fruit, so believers receive "out of the fulness of Christ, grace for grace," so that they bring forth the fruits of righteousness and goodness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

3. The salvation of God thus begun, shall be perfected in glory. Grace is the bud of glory. Even now, the heirs of heaven have a foretaste of heaven. They have the Spirit of God, who is the *Seal* and the *Earnest*. "Hereby," saith St. John, "know we that we dwell in God, and he in us," because he hath given us of his Spirit. This is the great evidence, the great ground of assurance, that we

are in a state of salvation ; and that we have everlasting life : And having the earnest, we may depend upon the full possession. What a source of consolation is this, in all the troubles of this miserable world ! Here only is an antidote to death. And this is enough. If sin be pardoned, death cannot hurt us. The sting of death is sin, but Christ has extracted the sting. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Soon shall the believer be delivered from all the trials of the present state. The separated spirit shall be with Christ ; and the mortal body shall be raised a glorious body. “ Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of the Father.” And thus, you see, the Gospel is the power of God, to present an eternal salvation. And is this a thing to be ashamed of ? God forbid. This is what we were in the third and last place to prove, namely, that,

III. There is no reason why we should be ashamed of the Gospel, but rather that we ought to glory in it.

Shame is a very powerful passion. It was introduced by sin, and should be applied to nothing else. But it is the misery of our fallen nature that we “ glory in our shame,” and are ashamed of our glory. Wicked men are not ashamed of sin, but they are ashamed of that Gospel which would save them from sin. Through the temptations of the devil, and the ignorance, pride, and carnality of the human heart, true religion has always been accounted a shameful thing, so that it has always required a holy boldness to make an open profession of it. But let us see what it is that makes men ashamed of the Gospel, and whether there be any good reason for being so.

1. Some are ashamed of the Gospel because it is chiefly poor and mean people who profess it. This was an objection made by the Pharisees to our Saviour himself—“ Have any of the Rulers, or of the Pharisees believed on him ?” The meanness of Christ’s outward appearance and that of his followers was a stumbling block to the Jews. But there is nothing solid in this objection. The design of God in the Gospel is to humble the pride of man, and therefore “ he hath chosen the foolish, weak, base, and despised things of the world, to confound the things that are wise,

mighty, and honourable, that no flesh should glory in his presence." Christ rejoiced that "the poor had the Gospel preached unto them," and that "divine things were revealed unto babes."

2. Some are ashamed of the Gospel, because it is, as they pretend, foolish and irrational, such as none but weak and ignorant people can embrace. So the Greeks, who were learned and wise, accounted it at first. So many who are "wise in their own conceit," now reckon it. They pretend that there are mysteries in it which cannot be understood, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, Regeneration, the Resurrection, &c. To this we answer, there are mysteries in nature, which the wisest man cannot explain, and is it any wonder that there should be mysteries in religion, especially that God, who is an infinite Spirit, should be above our comprehension? It is true that there are many things in the Gospel *above* our reason, but we defy any man to prove that there is one thing *contrary* to reason. Besides it should be remembered that man is a fallen creature; that the thoughts of his heart are evil continually; that "the natural man (the animal or rational man) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Hence we see that reason, though a noble gift of God, is insufficient to guide us in matters of religion; and he who would be saved must humble himself as a little child and pray to be taught of God. But,

3. The true and greatest cause why many are ashamed of the Gospel is, that it requires a holy life; it requires a separation from the world; the denial of self; the mortification of sin. It will not allow a man to live like a brute in the indulgence of his carnal lusts. It requires a life of faith, repentance, devotion; in a word, Christ says to every professor of his religion, "Give me thine heart." Now, while a man remains in his natural state, he loves the world, he loves sin, and his heart is enmity against God: "he loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil."

But this holy tendency of the Gospel is so far from being an objection to it, that we should prize it on this very account; this proves it came from God, and on this account,



St. Paul gloried in it. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I am crucified to the world."

APPLICATION.—And now, men and brethren, suffer the word of exhortation. Has God, in his infinite mercy, sent us this glorious Gospel? then let us be very thankful for it, and very attentive to it. Let it be the study of our lives, and the delight of our hearts. Nothing so justly demands, nothing can so well require our best regard, as this. It is God's greatest and best gift to a lost world. And he takes particular notice how we receive it. O let us beware of neglecting it. Angels desire to look into these things; and shall not *we* study them diligently, who are so much more interested in them? Compared with the Gospel, all other books are waste paper. Compared with the Gospel tidings, all other news is trifling. This alone can teach us how we may be pardoned and sanctified; this alone can secure our happiness in time and eternity.

We have now heard that the Gospel is the *power* of God, it is that which he works by, and renders effectual to the salvation—of whom? To whom is this Gospel, the powerful instrument of salvation? It is only to them that believe. Let infidels tremble; they, alas, have no part nor lot in this matter. Faith begins in an *assent*, a cordial assent, to the truth of the Gospel. It is received as a divine testimony. The believer sets his seal to it that it is true. Faith proceeds to *affiance* or *trust* in Christ. "He first gives a firm assent to the Gospel, then cordially accepts its blessings; from a conviction that the doctrine is true, he passes to a persuasion that the privileges are his own." The believer then cleaves inseparably to Christ, depends incessantly on Christ. Gladly does he renounce all dependence on himself, all ideas of human merit; he flies to this refuge, there he is safe; he builds on this foundation, and he shall never be removed. This done, sweet peace takes possession of his conscience; hope enlivens his breast; love warms his heart; zeal fires his soul; and he cries, "Dearest Saviour I am thine. Henceforth I will follow thee. I will serve thee all my days on earth, and I desire to be with thee for ever in heaven."

And are any ashamed of this Gospel ; a Gospel so wise, so holy ; so honourable to God, so safe to man ? Let them be ashamed of it who never knew its nature, who never felt its power. No man can be ashamed of it, if it be the power of God to his soul. No ; “ he that believeth hath the witness, or testimony in himself ; ” he can give a reason of the hope that is in him. And being baptized unto Christ, he will not be “ ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil ; and to continue Christ’s faithful soldier and servant unto his life’s end,” And O, beware ! beware young people, lest any seduce you from the faith, by the pride of reason and the sophistry of wicked men. Ever be on your guard, and remember those awful words of Christ—“ Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall also the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Finally, “ let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from all iniquity.” As we must not be ashamed of the Gospel, neither let us be a shame to it. Many are too much prejudiced against the Bible, even to read it ; but they love to read the lives of professors. Let them see the holy Gospel transcribed in our daily walk. So shall we adorn and recommend it to the world, and constrain them to say that Christianity is all divine.

## SERMON XXXV.

SIN AND DEATH, OR GRACE AND LIFE.

ROMANS, viii. 13...*If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

THESE words set before us LIFE and DEATH ;—*eternal* life, or *eternal* death : They plainly shew us what will be the eternal consequence of a life of sin, or of a state of grace ; and therefore it is of the greatest importance to us clearly to understand them, in order that we

may know what will be our future portion. "It is a question, said an old divine, you ought seriously to put to yourselves, Shall I be saved, or Shall I be damned? If you have any spark of conscience left, when you are sick or dying, you will put it with an anxious and trembling heart. Poor soul, whither art thou going? It is better, my friends, to put this question *now*, while you have opportunity to correct your error, if hitherto you have been wrong. And nothing will sooner determine it than this text." "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, &c." These words contain two things, which I shall express in two plain sentences.

I. If sin *live* in us, we must *die* eternally, and

II. If sin *die* in us, we shall *live* eternally.

I. If sin *live* in us we shall *die*; that is, if it reign and rule; "if we live after the flesh we shall die."

By the *flesh*, we are to understand human nature in its present fallen state. Man is made up of two parts, body and soul, or flesh and spirit, but man is now called *flesh*, because the spirit is dead to God, and he lives only a fleshly or animal life. So God spake of the wicked world before the flood, Gen. vi. 3. "And the Lord said, my Spirit shall not always strive with man," that is by the good counsels and faithful warnings of Noah and others, "for that he also is flesh"—incurably corrupt, carnal and sensual; sunk into the mire of sin and fleshy lusts. This is still the case of all men before they receive the grace of God; they are flesh. They take their name from that part which rules, which is the flesh, and not the spirit: they are wholly engaged by things which concern the body and its sensual delights. Hence it is that the *mind* itself is called *carnal* or *fleshy*, ver. 5, 6, "For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." This bad turn of mind is called *flesh*, because it exerts itself by means of the senses and members of the body; for carnal men "yield their members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity," Rom. vi. 19. Habits and practices of uncleanness and iniquity are like tyrannical lords and masters, which rule over sinners; to



whom they have resigned the members of their bodies, and the affections of their minds.

Now, to *live after the flesh*, is to obey the dictates and orders of our corrupt nature ; to gratify its sinful desires, without regard to the will of God, yea in direct contradiction to his will. And this will appear more plainly by considering the *actions*, the *words*, and the *thoughts* of a carnal man.

Take a view, in the first place, of his *actions*. Among these the Apostle, Gal. v. 19, mentions " Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, &c." These are abominations to which corrupt nature is strongly inclined. The world is full of pollution through lust. In youth, especially, these sins are predominant ; and " it is a shame even to speak of the things that are done in secret." And however lightly the sins of uncleanness may be thought of in general, we are assured by the Scriptures, that " whosoever does these things, and adulterers God will judge." *Drunkenness* is another work of the flesh. Fools make a mock at this sin also, but St. Paul declares 1 Cor. vi. 10, that " drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God." It is very common for a person to promise himself security in this sin, and to say, " I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst ;" but what does God say in this case ? " The Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man," Deut. xxix. 19. The *profane* man also lives after the flesh. What can be a plainer proof that man is destitute of the fear of God, than his daring to set the Most High at defiance, and wantonly and wickedly to take his awful name in vain ? The *Sabbath breaker* lives after the flesh. The man, who, having no regard to the authority of God, no love to his service, and no care for his own soul, dares to spend the sacred hours of the Lord's day in worldly business, idleness, and pleasure. The conduct of the Sabbath breaker proves, in a dreadful manner, that he is flesh, and as much a stranger to the life of God in the soul as the beasts that perish. " Let no man, then, deceive himself with vain words ; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

But it is not only by these grossly immoral actions that

men appear to live after the flesh; a man's *speech* bewrayeth him. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." We have already mentioned cursing and swearing, on account of which our land mourneth. Equally carnal is the corrupt communication which proceedeth out of the mouth; that "filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting, which are not convenient." O how is the tongue, the glory of man, debased by cursing, lying, slandering, evil speaking, lewd songs, and wanton speeches. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: it defileth our members, and is set on fire of hell," James iii. 6. The conversation of carnal men is wholly carnal. They can talk fluently for hours together upon worldly subjects, but let the things of God be introduced, the company is struck dumb! natural men can find nothing to say to God, or to one another, on the great and glorious subjects of salvation and eternal life.

But we must go a step further, "As a man *thinketh* in his heart, so he is." A man must be judged of by his prevailing, chosen, and delightful thoughts. "Out of the heart," said our Lord, "proceed evil thoughts." A good man may have bad thoughts, but a bad man, a natural man, cannot have good thoughts. A good man hates vain, wicked, lewd, or blasphemous thoughts; but a wicked man loves, cherishes, and delights in them. It is said of the wicked, "God is not in all his thoughts." He rises in the morning without any thoughts of God. He goes about his business without any thoughts of him. He sits down to his table, and rises from it without any thoughts of him. —And he goes to rest, like a beast in the same manner. Thus it is said in verse 5, of this chapter—"they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh"—they are *carnally minded*; they constantly and habitually consult and relish, pursue, and delight in only worldly, sensual, and sinful things, such as are agreeable to their carnal and unrenewed appetites. And this may serve to convince some persons, how much they deceive themselves respecting their true state before God. They flatter themselves that they shall be saved, because they are not so wicked as others; but they have never noticed the prevailing bent and inclination of their minds. They are not drunkards, or swearers, or liars; "but they mind earthly things;"

and St. John assures us, that “if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us.” Doubtless there is a necessary, lawful, and commendable regard to our proper callings, and worldly affairs, and there is a lawful enjoyment of worldly comforts; but the evil lies in this, so to love the world as to make it our portion, our chief good; to love the world more than God, who does not reckon himself to be loved sincerely, unless he be loved *supremely*, “with all our heart and soul and strength.” The love of God and the love of the world are like the two scales of a balance, as the one rises the other falls; and let every man ask himself how it is with him. O how little place have the blessed God, the precious Redeemer, the Holy Spirit, the care of the soul, the duties of religion, or the concerns of eternity, in the hearts of natural men! The thoughts of these things are seldom entertained, and then they are not welcomed. They are a burden and a task; and the mind, when forced to regard them, dislikes them, and springs from them again into worldly matters with delight, as a fish into the water, which is its own proper element.

Now, sirs, as you love your souls, mark the consequence of living after the flesh—“If ye live after the flesh ye shall die!” Dreadful words, “Ye shall die!” “To be carnally minded is death.” It is a kind of death in itself. The carnal man is now dead to God; “dead while he liveth;” “dead in trespasses and sins.” And “the wages of sin is death.” Not only the death of the body, which is the separation of the soul from it; but the death of soul and body too, in their everlasting separation from God, the fountain of all happiness. “This is the second death,” as it comes after that of the body, and is inexpressibly more terrible; and shall never end in a resurrection to eternal life. At present, God exercises much patience towards his enemies. His sun shines and his rain descends, both on good and bad men. He gives them time and space for repentance, to which his merciful goodness ought to lead them. But when all these have proved in vain, and the man has persisted in his carnal course to the end of life, then God will withdraw all his favours; his mercy indeed will be clean gone for ever, and he will be favourable no more. And O, woe, woe, woe to the man from whom

God departs, and to whom he will say, “depart from me ye cursed.”

All this is the natural and necessary consequence of living after the flesh. What else could be reasonably expected? There are but two eternal states for men after this life. Every man is training up for one of these. The carnal man is unfit for heaven. There he cannot come; for all the joys and employments of the blessed are spiritual. Delighting in God, loving God, praising God, are the charming employments of the redeemed. But the carnal man well knows that he has no relish for these things; and he could not be happy in heaven, were he admitted there. What then must be his portion? There is no other place for him but hell; and for this he was fitting himself all his days. He was training up in enmity against God, hardening his heart, and abusing his mercies; despising his grace, neglecting his salvation, trampling on his authority, and blaspheming his name; thus was he preparing for that horrid dungeon, where he must be the companion of men like minded, and of devils whose dictates he obeyed. “Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

O think of this, ye who live in sin! See what an enemy you have, even the flesh; an enemy within; an enemy without which the devil might tempt and the world invite in vain. Beware, then, of indulging the flesh; it may seem to be your friend, but it is your worst foe; and, like Judas, it kisses to betray. Fly then from the allurements of sinful pleasure and sensual enjoyments. I beseech you to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; and in your turn declare war against the flesh. This indeed is a just and a necessary war; a war that shall be successful and glorious; for, as it is added in our text—“If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;” which leads us to the second thing proposed, namely,

II. If sin *die* in us, we shall live eternally.

Here we must consider what is meant by mortifying sin—by what help we may do it; and—the blessed consequence of doing it.



To *mortify* sin is to *kill* it; to *put it to death*, as the magistrates put a felon to death, by due course of justice. He is suspected, apprehended, tried, and executed. We must first suspect ourselves and our sins. Consideration is the first step in religion. He who never suspected he was wrong, may depend upon it he is not yet right. Sin must be considered as our worst enemy; the tyrant that would enslave and destroy our souls. We must find out our sins, or "be sure they will find us out." We must determine, by the grace of God, to destroy them, or they will destroy us. The matter must be brought to this issue, kill or be killed. You must kill sin, or it will kill you.

But how is this to be done? Sin must be *crucified*. This is the manner of killing it which God has appointed.— "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," Gal. v. 24. The destruction of our sins is compared to the crucifixion of Christ, not only because it is like it, but because it proceeds from it. There is no death of sin but by the death of Christ; by virtue of it, and by interest in it.

Crucifixion is a *violent* and *painful* death; and so is the death of sin. Our sins must not be left to die of themselves. Some people, especially, old people, think that they have left their sins, when the fact is, their sins have left them, or one sin has left them to make room for another. Sin must be seized, though in the height of its health and power; seized as a thief or murderer who breaks into your house. It may be very painful to mortify the deeds of the body. Jesus Christ compares it to cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye, but he says, this is better than going to hell with two hands or two eyes. It may be very hard to break off from old sins, but it *must* be done; and, by the grace of God, it *may* be done.

Crucifixion is a *scandalous* death. Only the worst of slaves and criminals were put to death in this manner. So the Christian, who through the Spirit, mortifies the deeds of the body, puts off the old man of sin, and puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, may expect to be despised as his Saviour was. The world will bear morality, but it hates holiness. Religion has generally borne some nick name. Formerly they called pious men *Puritans*, as if it were a

scandalous thing to be purified from the pollutions of the world ; and now they call religious people *Methodists*, as if it were shameful to pursue the methods which God himself prescribes. But “ he that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution.”

Crucifixion is a *slow* and *lingering* death. Our Lord was several hours on the cross ; and some have been as many days. So sin dies slowly. Mortifying the deeds of the body is a constant act ; to be continued as long as we live. The best believer cannot say sin is dead, but he can bless God that sin is dying. It is nailed to the cross ; has received some mortal wounds ; it is gradually weakening ; and, ere long, God will send death to give the finishing stroke, and the believer shall shout *Victory*, saying, Blessed be God who hath delivered me from this body of sin and death ; I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord.

But, by what means, or by what help, may we effectually mortify sin ? Our text says, “ Through the Spirit ” —by the gracious aid and influence of the Holy Spirit enabling us to do it. “ Without me,” said Christ, “ ye can do nothing : ” and experience proves it true. How many poor souls have been sensible of the error of their ways, at times alarmed about their sins, and have resolved to forsake them, and lead a new life ! but knowing nothing of their own weakness or of Christ’s strength, they have “ Resolved, and re-resolved, and died the same.” To as little purpose have others said many prayers, fasted certain days, denied themselves the comforts of life, or submitted to the painful penance of Popish priests. The power of sin was not lessened ; the principle of sin was not weakened ; the practice of sin was not prevented. When the sense of sin was worn off, and the fears of hell abated, they “ returned like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

“ A young gentleman, whose sensual lusts were extremely violent procured an entire female scull ; and every morning, before he went out, spent some minutes in surveying it ; expecting that the sight of so unpleasing an object would operate as an antidote to the power of that temptation to which he was so subject. But alas, his corrupt inclination

still prevailed, and he sinned as frequently as ever. So he gave away the scull, finding it did him no service. Afterwards, God was pleased to convert him; and vital grace did that for him which a dead scull was unable to effect. His easy besetting sin had no more dominion over him from the day that the Holy Ghost laid effectual hold on his heart."

We must first *have* the Spirit, that we may experience his sanctifying power. Having the Spirit, makes all the difference between a true Christian and a man of the world; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." There is nothing in the flesh, or corrupt nature, that can crucify the flesh, or prevent its corrupt actings. Something of a nature directly contrary to it must be added, and that is a new and divine principle, implanted by regeneration; for "that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit:" The regenerated person is a spiritual person, possessed of a principle like its Author; and this principle acts according to its spiritual nature, in spiritual duties, and particularly in this, the mortification of sin.

The Spirit helps us to mortify sin by enabling us to discover it, and by shewing us its hateful and abominable nature; filling our souls with a sincere dislike to it, and a holy determination to destroy it. He takes away the stony insensible heart, and gives us an heart of flesh, an heart to mourn for sin, an heart to oppose sin, an heart to watch against sin, and shun the first approaches towards it.

But especially he helps us to mortify sin by giving us faith, and leading us to Christ for pardon, righteousness, and strength. In the first verse of this chapter it is said—"There is no condemnation to them which are *in Christ Jesus*," and then it follows—"who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" Many of the Jews "followed after righteousness, but they did not attain it. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at the stumbling stone." Let us beware of stumbling in the same manner. Faith in Christ is the chief instrument for killing sin. Behold the Lamb of God, bleeding and dying, not only to

take away the guilt of sin that it may not condemn, but the power of sin also that it may not prevail. "Sin shall not have dominion over thee, believer, for thou art not under the law, but under grace." See, flowing from the wounded side of thy crucified Lord, blood and water; blood to pardon, water to cleanse. It was the design of the dear Redeemer "to destroy the works of the devil;" "to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The Lord Jesus having thus designed the death of sin in believers by his own death, is ready to apply the power of it for that purpose, to all who believe in him. Come then, by faith, to Jesus; tell him of the power of thy sins, and of thy inability to destroy them; plead the fulness that is in him for thy supply; beseech him to subdue thine iniquities, and leave the matter in his hands. His grace is sufficient for thee; his strength shall be perfected in thy weakness. Expect his help. His power, his grace, his faithfulness, are all engaged for thine assistance, and thou shalt not apply or wait in vain.

This promised help of the Spirit does not exclude the use of means on our part. The Spirit so works *in* us, as also to work *by* us. The duty is ours; the grace is his. We must watch and pray lest we enter into temptation. We must remember his eye is always upon us. We must call to mind the obligations we are under, from duty, from gratitude, from baptismal, and sacramental engagements; the relation we bear to Christ, to the church, and the world. We must use with moderation the comforts of life, and instead of pampering the body, bring it under and keep it in subjection.

Thus doing, *we shall live*. There is no condemnation to persons of this character. Though they find, to their daily sorrow, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," they have reason to rejoice that "the Spirit lusteth against the flesh." This is an evidence that they have "passed from death unto life." They live *indeed*, for Christ liveth in them. They live to purpose, they live to God. And in this, their gradual sanctification, consists their meetness for heaven, where sin shall be all done away. O Christian,



go on. Be not weary in well-doing, fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on *eternal life*.

But, O sinner, what will be the end of thy present pursuits? "The end of these things is death." Lay to heart the solemn truths you heard in the beginning of this discourse. Remember that life and death have been set before you; life, if sin be slain; death if sin prevail. Put home then to thy conscience the important question. Am I living after the flesh, or after the Spirit? And by this you may determine your present state, and future prospects. If thou livest after the flesh, thou shalt die; that is, thou shalt be damned. And are you in love with death and destruction? Is it nothing to you that the terrors of the Almighty are sounded in your ears? Do you love your sins so well as to be damned for them? O, be wiser! "Set eternal pains against momentary pleasures. The *pleasures* of sin are but for a season, but the *pains* of sin are for evermore." And O, do not flatter yourselves that you may enjoy the pleasures of sin in this world, and yet enjoy the pleasures of heaven in another. The God who says, in our text, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," is a God of truth he cannot lie. "Upon the wicked he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." Come, then, forsake the foolish and live. Wrong not your own souls. Forsake not your own mercies. Let the time past suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, and to have served divers lusts and pleasures. Open your eyes and behold your danger. Flee from the wrath to come. Confess your sins to God. Beseech him to pardon them; and pray for the Holy Spirit to work faith in your heart, and enable you "to mortify the deeds of the body, that you may live."

## SERMON XXXVI.

## PARDONING MERCY.

ISAIAH i. 8.....Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD:  
Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though  
they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

**T**HE pardon of sin has been justly called, *The life-blood of religion*. It is this which runs through all parts of the Scripture, like the blood in our veins, and is the foremost object in the glorious Gospel. No man has a grain of religion till he sees the need, and feels the want, of the pardon of his sins. No man is happy in religion till he has reason to conclude that his sins are pardoned. Gratitude for this blessing is the grand incentive to holy obedience, and triumph on account of it forms the bliss of glorified saints. How worthy, then, is this subject of our most serious regard! We all need pardon; and *pardon* or *punishment* must be our portion.

Among the precious promises of God's word, this, in our text, is one of the chief. And it appears the more gracious, as it follows a list of most heinous and abominable sins charged upon the Jews. This will appear more clearly by considering the three parts of our text.

1. A CHARGE. 2. AN INVITATION, and 3. A PROMISE.

1. The first thing in the text is a CHARGE implied, and more particularly expressed in the former verses of this chapter. The charge is *Sin*—sin, the most aggravated, the most horrid, the most enormous. Sins, called *scarlet* and *crimson*. The greatness of sin is intended by these words. *Scarlet* and *crimson* are colours far remote from *white*, which is the emblem of innocence or righteousness. The saints in glory are represented as “clothed in white robes,” and “in fine linen, clean and white,” which is the righteousness of the saints. But here, sinners are represented as in garments stained with blood. The bloody, murderous, destructive nature of sin may be intended. Sin has slain its millions. If all the bodies of the dead were heaped up, they would form the greatest mountain in the world; and we might say—sin slew all

these ; “ for, by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; so that death hath passed over all men, for that all have sinned.” Some understand by the word *scarlet—double dyed*—as deeply tinged by sin as possible ; as when any garment has been twice dyed, first in the wool, and again in the thread or piece. So great sinners are twice dyed ; first in their corrupt nature, for all men are born in sin ; and then dyed again in the long confirmed habits of actual transgressions.

But let us look over the particulars of this charge. Sinners are first charged with *Ingratitude*, ver. 2. “ Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth ; for the Lord hath spoken ; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.” Call a man ungrateful, and you call him all that is bad : but the ingratitude of children is the worst ingratitude. Children are under the greatest obligations to their tender parents, for food and raiment, protection and education ; but if, instead of dutiful obedience and affectionate care, they return evil for good, rebellion instead of subjection ; it is like fixing a dagger in a parent’s heart. Such a trial David felt in the wicked conduct of his beloved Absalom. In this manner God speaks of man’s sin. God is good ; and “ the goodness of God leadeth us to repentance ;” but impenitent sinners “ despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering ; and thus treasure up wrath against the day of wrath.”

Again. Sinners are charged with *Insensibility*, ver. 3, “ the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib : but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider.” It is a sad thing indeed, that man, who was made in the image of God, should be made by sin like the beasts that perish ; yea, worse than they are. The ox is a stupid creature, yet he knows his owner, and submits his neck to the yoke ; the ass is more stupid, yet he knows when he is well off, and abides by his master’s crib ; but sinners are more base, more ignorant, more stupid : “ They have the worst qualities of brutes, without the best.” They do not know God ; they do not consider their duty to God, nor their obligations to God ; even Israel, that might and ought to know better.

They are further charged with *forsaking God*. All sinners do so. They turn their backs upon him. They say, in effect "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways: "What is the Almighty that we should serve him; and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" Besides this, they *corrupted others*. They were not content to eat the devil's morsel alone; they must entice others to poison them with it. And, indeed, this is awfully common among us. When young persons fall into the sin of uncleanness, how active are they to seduce others; when men fall into the sin of drunkenness, how busy are they to engage others in the same vice.

These sins were *universal*, ver. 4. "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity! All orders of people were guilty; the whole head was sick, the whole heart was faint." God knows it is thus in England. We are a wicked people, and the Lord is *provoked* with us. All the miseries of human life, all the terrors and agonies of death, all the torments of the damned, are proofs of God's anger against sin. Sin is a heavy load, though fools make light of it. And they who make light of it now, are likely to feel its dreadful weight in another world. Sooner or later it will be found a burden too heavy to bear. Happy they, who now feeling its load, obey the kind invitation of Christ, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The condition of Israel, and of every sinner is compared, ver. 6, to that of a human body wholly disordered and become intolerably loathsome. "From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." See, sinner, thy wretched picture! Sin is the disease of thy soul, and the worst symptom is, thou knowest it not. We pity the ravings of a man in a fever, who fancies himself in health; such is the dangerous condition of sinners who boast of their "good hearts," or call their abominations "human frailties," or "youthful follies." In the eye of a pure and holy God, the sinner is far more loathsome than a carcase covered with bleeding wounds, running sores, or filthy ulcers.



It is absolutely necessary that each of us should personally know that this is his own case. Ministers are, at the peril of their own souls, obliged to declare this ; they must shew the people their sins, and warn them from God, or the sinners' blood will be required at their hands. But if sinners are faithfully warned, ministers are free from their blood ; their blood is on their own heads. But O ! how unwilling are men to see and own their true condition ! How do they shut their eyes against the light that would make manifest their works of darkness ! How dearly do they love the darkness that conceals their sins ! How angry are they to be told of their disease ! How do they hate the Gospel that reveals a remedy, and shun the kind physician who would cure them ! And yet, mark their inconsistency ! Do you not hear them deny to men that they are *condemned* ; and yet cry to God to *have mercy on them* ? But if they are not condemned what need have they of *mercy* ? And if they are, why do they deny their lost estate ? We hear them also praising God for his " inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ ;" but how absurd is this if they believe not, if they feel not the wretched bondage of their sins ?

But now, observe, with wonder and joy, the astonishing grace of God. What language might sinners justly expect who had been convicted of ingratitude, rebellion, insensibility, and every provoking sin ? Might they not well expect that God should say, " Depart from me ye cursed !" But, O surprising mercy, his language is, " Come now and let us reason ~~to~~ together ;" and this is the

SECOND thing in the text, THE INVITATION : " And is this the manner of man, O Lord ?" Far from it. Truly, " his thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways." God does not deal with men, as men deal with each other. If a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away ? No : but God, from whom no enemy can escape, and who can at any time take the deserved vengeance, invites poor sinners to come and reason with him. God had charged Israel with their many sins. He had visited them with national judgments. He had refused to accept their hypocritical devotions. He had threatened to give them up and utterly forsake them ; and lastly, he

had called them to repentance and reformation; ver. 16, 17. "Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." And then he adds, "Come now, and let us *reason* together." God is willing to shew the equity of his conduct. Let these bold offenders come and plead their own cause, and shew what they have to say for themselves; and let them find fault, if they can, with the divine proceedings. If they will persist in sin, their damnation is just. If they confess and forsake it, they shall find mercy: their scarlet sins shall be as white as snow.

We shall take occasion, from hence, briefly to shew that true religion, *vital* religion, is the most reasonable thing in the world.

*Is not self-preservation highly reasonable?* We account it the first law of nature, and should blame the man who neglects it. Is a house on fire? let the inhabitant escape for his life. Is the prodigal ready to starve? let him hasten to his father's house. Is the man drowning? let him seize on the rope thrown out for help. Is the ship sinking? let the sailors throw overboard their valuable stores, for "all that a man hath will he give for his life." But is the life of the body all? What must become of the soul? Shall we take all these pains to preserve a life that must inevitably end, and shall we take no pains to save a soul that is immortal, and which must live for ever in heaven or hell? Hear how Christ reasons, Matt. x. 28, "Fear not them which kill the *body*, but are not able to kill the *soul*; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell:" for consider:—God asks the question—"Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the day that I shall deal with thee?"

*Is it not reasonable for a man to do well for himself?* "yes: men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself?" We commend the honest, ingenious, industrious tradesman; but, O! "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Is it reasonable for a man to mind his own business? Well; "one thing is needful; the care of thy soul is the business of

life. Is it reasonable to improve opportunities for business, as fairs and markets? Redeem then the time, and catch the golden opportunities of gain to thy soul. Is it reasonable to make a good bargain? The Christian makes the best in the world. He is the wise merchant, who, seeking goodly pearls, findeth, at length, Jesus Christ, the pearl of great price, and goeth and selleth all that he hath to buy it. Is it reasonable to lay up for a rainy day? How much more to provide for a dying day, that we may be ready for the great change, and find it gain to die? Is it reasonable to cultivate friendship with the wise, the good, and the great. O how wise to make Christ our friend, to have an agent in heaven, an advocate with the Father; for, indeed, "Jesus Christ is the best friend or the worst enemy we can have."

*Is it not reasonable to believe the God of truth?* The word of God has every confirmation we could wish. It is confirmed by the exact fulfilment of numerous predictions, by the performance of unquestionable miracles; by its perfect agreement with matters of fact, both in observation and experience; and by the daily wonders of grace performed by its means. Whatever some men pretend to the contrary, they and they only, act a rational part who take God at his word; while others are so unreasonable as to "make God a liar," and give credit to the grand deceiver.

Finally, *Is not love to God and man perfectly reasonable?* This is the whole of our religion. Is it reasonable or not, think you, to love the best of beings better than all other beings? And if we love him, we shall believe him, and obey him. Should not a creature love his Maker? Should not a dependent love his benefactor? Should not a redeemed sinner love his Saviour? And what is the whole of morality, as it respects man, but loving our neighbour as ourselves? and where is the man who wishes not thus to be treated by others?

But we have a further and a very strong inducement to obey the divine invitation, and come to reason with him, for he has made a most gracious PROMISE in the text, which is the

THIRD particular of our discourse. This gracious promise is, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall

be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

The pardon of sin, is as we observed at the beginning, the first and chief thing in religion. It was the great business of Christ upon earth to procure it ; he took our flesh that he might take our sin, and died, " the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." It is the principal design of the Gospel, which is preached to us, " that we may obtain forgiveness of sins." It is the first blessing sought by renewed souls ; " for this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found." It constitutes one of the titles of the blessed God : " Who is like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity ?" And it composes a part of the songs of heaven ; for the redeemed continually adore " the Lamb that was slain, and who washed them from their sins in his own blood."

The pardon of sin originates in the free mercy and sovereign grace of God, without respect to any thing good in the creature. That *men* are saved rather than *angels* ; and that *one* man is pardoned rather than *another*, is a matter of mercy alone ; for " it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy ; for he saith to Moses, I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." It was mere mercy that a Saviour was provided, for " God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." God delighteth in mercy. It is his most glorious name ; for, when Moses desired to see his *glory*, God caused his *goodness* to pass before him, and proclaimed his name ; which name was this : " The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin," Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19, and xxxiv. 5, 6. We are not to suppose that some men obtain mercy because they have not sinned so much as others ; as great sins do not prevent pardon, so little sinners cannot lay a claim to it. Nor are we to think that there are some good things in some sinners, to balance their bad ones, and so entitle them to mercy. Nor that the tears, or prayers, or reformation of any



man can merit favour at the hands of God. No. All these, and every thing else that looks like merit, must be renounced altogether. Every mouth must be stopped. All the world must plead guilty ; and all the saved must own, that God, “ for his own name’s sake ” alone, pardons their iniquity.

But we are not to expect the pardon of sin from an absolute God. The pardon of sin is an act of justice as well as of mercy. Mercy on God’s part, but justice on the account of Christ. In the pardon of sin, justice must be considered as well as mercy. If God had pardoned sin without a satisfaction, what provision would have been made for the honor of his holiness, justice, or truth ? God would have seemed to wink at sin ; he would have seemed to have no concern for the moral government of the world ; and his truth, which was engaged to see the threatening against sin fulfilled, would have been forfeited ; but in the redemption of Jesus Christ, “ mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other ; ” in a word, “ God is just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus ; ” he is “ a just God and a Saviour.” In this blessed way, justice itself becomes the believer’s friend : for Christ having paid the debt, it cannot be demanded a second time of the believer ; and, therefore God is not only merciful in pardoning sin, but “ he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins ; and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John v. 9.

Another principal thing in the doctrine of forgiveness is, that it is *by faith alone* we are made partakers of pardoning mercy. Jesus Christ himself says, Acts xxvi. 18. “ That they may receive forgiveness of sins *through faith* that is in me ; ” and St. Paul says, “ By grace are ye saved, *through faith.* ” By faith, we mean “ a belief of the truth,” especially of the testimony of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ ; “ that he hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son.” The man who is taught of God, made sensible of his sin, and desirous of mercy, hears the Gospel, which is good news of salvation by Jesus Christ ; he hears that “ there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared ; ” that Christ is willing and able to save sinners, and that “ his blood cleanseth from all sin,”

He assents to this truth, he relies upon it, and acts accordingly ; and in proportion to the credit which he gives to the Gospel, and the dependance he places on the faithfulness of God, such is his joy and peace in believing.

One thing more must be noticed : The perfection of pardon, which is expressed by making scarlet as snow, and crimson like wool. We are to understand this of the *sinner*, not of his *sins*. Pardon does not alter the nature or lessen the evil of sin ; but the sinner, however deeply dyed in sin, double dyed, and drenched in the most enormous, aggravated, and bloody sins, shall, upon believing, be as thoroughly discharged from the guilt of them as if he had never sinned at all. This is an act of Almighty power. To discharge the colours of scarlet and crimson may be impossible to human art, but to pardon the vilest sinners is perfectly easy to God. Elsewhere the same idea is expressed by casting our sins behind his back—losing them in the depths of the sea—blotting them out of a book—forgetting them, and removing them from us as far as the east is from the west. Such is the perfection of pardoning mercy !

APPLICATION.—Come, Sirs, what think you of sin ? Perhaps you forget it ; but God does not forget it. If it be not pardoned, it will be brought into judgment. Think not yourselves safe, because you fancy your sins are little, or because they give you no disturbance, or because you prosper in the world, or because you have hopes of mercy. “The wages of sin is death.” The law curses you for one offence ; and if you are not redeemed, you must be ruined ; if not pardoned, you must be punished. If you believe not in Christ you are condemned already. Notwithstanding the mercy of God and the merits of Christ, if you continue in a state of ignorance, carnality, and unbelief, they will not at all avail you. Food cannot nourish if not received ; nor a medicine heal if not applied. You will be none the better for Christ, if you do not come to him ; but you will be much the worse ; for how shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation ? Think of these things, O ye children of men, before it be too late. How can you enjoy a meal, or sleep in your beds, while your sins remain unpardoned ? O delay no longer. No longer abuse

the patience and goodness of God. Instantly fly to the refuge, O ye prisoners of hope. As yet the door is open. God will pardon the greatest sinner that comes to him by Jesus Christ. Take with you the words of the text, and say "Lord, I come at thy call; my sins are indeed as scarlet, for thy name's sake make them white as snow; my crimes are red like crimson, O wash me in the fountain of the Saviour's blood, and they shall be as wool."

Believer! All hail! "Blessed art thou whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity." Happy art thou. God gave thee to see thy sins, to feel thy sins, to lament thy sins. God open thine eyes to understand his Gospel. God enable thee to come with all thy sins to Christ; and believing in him thou hast passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation. Admire the love of God. Admire the blood of Christ. Admire the grace of the Holy Spirit:

"And let your glad obedience prove  
How much you owe, how much you love."

## SERMON XXXVII.

### THE PENITENT THIEF.

Luke xxiii, 42, 43...*And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*

WHO can read these words, or consider the conversion and pardon of the dying thief, without exclaiming, in the words of St. Paul—"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!" Here is a wonderful instance of divine, free, and sovereign grace, abounding towards the chief of sinners: It is recorded for the encouragement of great sinners in every age; that *they* may take refuge in Christ "who are ready to perish;" and it affords a pleasing proof that "he is able to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by him."

Our blessed Lord was crucified with two thieves, and placed between them, that he might be thought the worst

of the three. But thus the scripture was fulfilled, "He was numbered with the transgressors," or "criminals." The chief priests, the scribes, the rulers and the mob, all joined in mocking and deriding him; not content with beholding his extreme sufferings, they had the cruelty to add insult to his pains. "Come down from the cross," said they "and then we will believe. Thou that didst save others, save thyself;" and "Save us too," said the thieves; not seriously, but by way of taunt; for, it is written, "the thieves also which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." O what an instance is this of the savage hardness of the human heart! how dreadful, that wicked men, dying in their sins, should strive to forget their own agonies, that they might join in abusing and insulting the Son of God. A state of more desperate and confirmed wickedness can hardly be conceived.

But behold the grace of God! One of these men is snatched as a brand from the fire; plucked, as in an instant, out of the very jaws of destruction. An astonishing, perhaps a sudden change is produced. He cries for mercy, and he obtains it. He looks to Jesus, and is saved. From being a hardened sinner, he becomes at once an eminent saint; obtains assurance of immediate bliss; and passes from the gallows to glory.

Let us now carefully consider the two parts of our text, into which it naturally divides itself,

I. The prayer of the dying malefactor.

II. The gracious answer of the Saviour.

In attending to the first, consider, for a moment, the character of the criminal, for a criminal he was; a malefactor; a highwayman; one who belonged to a desperate gang of robbers who infested that country; a set of seditious banditti, who were for shaking off the Roman yoke, and who lived by rapine and plunder. It is not improbable that he was a murderer also; for such men scruple not to kill as well as steal. This is the man who becomes the trophy of sovereign grace. For surely it will be admitted that here was no previous goodness or worthiness to recommend him to the divine favour.

Is it not astonishing to hear such a man as this suing for mercy? But what cannot grace effect, and that in a mo-



ment! He who in the first creation said, "Let there be light, and light there was," can, in an instant, dart a ray of spiritual light into the darkest mind. Whether any means were employed for the communication of this light or not, we cannot say. Some imagine he was first affected by the strange, total, supernatural darkness, which then suddenly overspread the land—an emblem of the inward darkness which soon involved the sacred soul of our dear Redeemer; and a dismal presage of the dreadful ignorance and darkness which should cover the Jews; and which has covered them ever since. Possibly, the pathetic prayer of our Lord for his murderers first touched his heart—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." There was so much dignity, so much tenderness and mercy, in this, that perhaps it was the means in the hands of the Spirit, for melting the rock of ice in his bosom. Or who can say whether, before this unhappy, or shall I say, now *happy* man, joined himself to the gang of thieves, whether he had not, now and then, mingled with the multitude who heard our Saviour's sermons, and saw his amazing miracles: and though his vices had long suppressed every good motion in his heart, yet now, in the time of his trouble, he calls to mind what he had before neglected? "For a grain of the divine word frequently falls on an uncultivated soil; so that it produces no fruit till many years after, when sufferings and afflictions cause it to spring up." And this may afford a ray of comfort to ministers and parents, encouraging them to hope, that though their prayers and instructions seem for the present to be lost, yet that, finally, "their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

*Behold he prayeth!* So it was observed of Saul, as a proof of his conversion. So we say, with wonder and surprise, of the thief—Behold he prayeth! Perhaps he never prayed before, or he had long forgot to pray. Had he prayed, he had not come to the cross; he had not been a thief: for, according to the Dutch proverb, "Praying will make a man leave sinning, or sinning will make a man leave praying." Now he prays; and, most wonderful change! from a man who hung upon a cross. He becomes a Christian at once, for a Christian is one who "with the heart believeth in God."

righteousness, and with the mouth maketh confession (of that faith) unto salvation." Rom. x. 10.

He calls Jesus LORD, which no man can do aright "but by the Holy Ghost." He gives him this title of dignity and authority, though degraded by the whole Jewish nation and branded with the name of a rebel, a Samaritan, an impostor.

He owns him also as a *King*, for he begs to be remembered by Jesus "when he shall come into his *kingdom*." You know the title that Pilate put over his head on the cross was, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*; and it was put there to intimate his crime, in assuming the character of King, in opposition to Cæsar: but he was really a king; he came into the world to be a king; to set up a new and spiritual kingdom in opposition, not to Cæsar, but to Satan; and this character he boldly avowed before Pilate. The penitent thief allows his claim, and begs to be admitted among his subjects. He understands also that "Christ's kingdom is not of this world," as the Jews foolishly thought the kingdom of Messiah was to be; and this was their fatal mistake; for on this account, they rejected the humble Lord of glory. They despised his mean appearance; they saw "no form nor any beauty, that they should regard him: despised, nor accounted in the number of men." "He was despised, and they esteemed him not," Isa. liii. 2, 3. But the faith of the thief broke through the clouds which obscured his real dignity; and "beheld the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

He pays him the just honour of having heaven at his disposal, according to what our Lord afterwards declared, "I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell," or, rather, *the unseen world*, including both heaven and hell. Rev. i. 18. The dying thief believed this, and his prayer was the language of faith, a confidential address to the Saviour.

Observe also the *modesty* of his application. *Remember me*; not *prefer* me to honour in thy kingdom, as the two ambitious disciples had formerly requested; but simply, *remember me*; he does not dictate how, or in what manner, he leaves it all to the Lord; but he commits his cause, his soul, to Christ; and, no doubt, with some degree of that

satisfaction, which St. Paul expressed in the view of death, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. i. 12. It was a request like that which Joseph made to the butler, (Gen. xl. 14.) "*think on me*, when it shall be well with thee; yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him." The poor thief succeeded better; he was remembered, and saved; for Jesus never said to any soul, "Seek me in vain." "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

As the case of this man was singular and extraordinary, so he gave very singular and extraordinary proofs of his *sincerity*. The professions of repentance and faith, *first* made in the hour of distress and in the prospect of death, are often uncertain, and may justly be suspected. Too many who, in the expectation of death, have seemed to be much in earnest, and gave great hope to Christian friends of a real change, have proved by their conduct when they recovered, that they were not sincere; for the vilest of men generally respect religion in their dying hours. But the penitent thief was enabled to give the most satisfactory evidence of sincerity; and the answer of Christ to him puts it beyond a doubt. Observe now the marks of his sincerity.

(1) *He reproves sin* in his comrade, especially his sin in reviling Christ—"Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" Persecutors of Christ, in his person, or in his members awfully prove their want of the fear of God: and every sin is greatly aggravated by that hardness of heart which persists in it, even in the time of sore affliction. True repentance will always occasion a sincere hatred to sin. True grace will ever make a man feel for others. The love of God and the love of man are always united. The true penitent will say with penitent David, "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Ps. li. 13.

(2.) *He condemns himself*, and admits the justice of God and of the magistrate in bringing him to the fatal tree—*we suffer justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds*—shameful and painful as our death is, it is no more than

we deserve. A just sense of sin will make a sufferer patient. He will say, "against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest." Ps. ii. 4.

(3.) *He vindicates Christ*—"But this man hath done nothing amiss." The Jewish courts had condemned him to death as the vilest of miscreants, and the whole multitude had cried, "Crucify him, crucify him;" but the thief, more honest and better taught than they, justifies his whole character; and truly says, "he hath done nothing amiss." Thus, in the face of all his infamous and powerful slanderers, he declares the innocence of Jesus, who was, indeed, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

Thus was clearly manifested the reality of that great and gracious change which had taken place in his heart. He was evidently enlightened in the knowledge of Christ; he was convinced of his sin and misery; he was humbled for it; he reproved sin in his neighbour; he honoured the character of Christ; he owned him as Lord, and King, and Saviour; and he commits his departing spirit into his faithful hands. What wonders of grace were crowded into this small place, enabling him in a few minutes, to give more glory to Christ than many do in the whole course of their lives!

II. Let us now proceed to consider the gracious answer of our Saviour to his dying request. *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*

Recollect, my friends, the situation of our Lord when he made this answer. Call to mind his personal sufferings at the moment. Behold him naked upon the cross. He that clothed the heavens with stars, the earth with flowers, and man with raiment, is despoiled of all his garments, and hangs exposed to the scorn of the rude mob. Great was the torment of crucifixion. First stretched and racked upon the cross, while it lay on the ground; then nailed to it, through the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet, with exquisite torture; the tree being elevated, is by a violent concussion settled in the ground; while every joint and sinew is painfully distended, and his whole weight



borne by the wounded parts. But "the sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings." A sense of his Father's wrath, and the burthen of the sins of the world, now lay heavy upon his soul. Darkness, that might be felt, filled his holy mind, and in the agony of his spirit he cries aloud, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Remember, it was during this inexpressible grief, that the Lord of Life vouchsafes this gracious answer. Excessive pain or grief, usually prevent our care for others; but the agonies of our Saviour lessened not his compassion for the souls of men. From the moment of his last visit to Jerusalem, when "he wept over it," until he gave up the ghost, tender pity to sinful men vented itself in the most affectionate accents. Witness his parting discourse, and pathetic prayer after the passover. Witness his kind apology for his sleeping disciples. Witness his direction to the sympathising females, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." Witness his intercession for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And now, upon the first application of this poor abandoned sinner, he instantly complies with his request, and grants him "exceeding abundantly above all he could ask or think."

How readily does God regard the sinner's cry! With speed like that which winged the feet of the prodigal's aged father, who no sooner beheld at a distance his long lost, but now returning son, but "while he was yet a great way off, had compassion, and ran, and fell upon his neck and kissed him." God is slow to anger, but quick to mercy; ready to forgive. He discerns the first motion of the soul heaven-ward, and while the sinner is "yet speaking" in prayer, the prayer is heard and answered.

Observe the substance of the answer—a place in paradise—Christ's company there—immediately, "to day;" and, the solemn assurance of the whole, "Verily, I say unto thee," it shall be so.

A place in *paradise* is promised; a place in *hell* was his desert, and would have been his portion, had he died in the same state he was half an hour before. Heaven is here called "Paradise;" in allusion to the garden of Eden, which the Lord God himself planted, and in which he put

the man he had formed. By sin, Adam soon lost his garden and his God. "He drove out the man." By the first Adam paradise is lost; by the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, Paradise is regained; a far better Paradise; a garden, from whence the blessed inhabitant shall never be driven out. "Here grows the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valley. Here flourishes the Plant of renown; here the unforbidden tree of knowledge, and the unguarded tree of life." No subtle serpent annoys this happy spot, any more to seduce; nor shall the free will of man betray him to ruin again.

Jesus promises to the penitent the enjoyment of *his own company there*—"this day thou shalt be *with me* in Paradise." Christ, then, was going, not to hell, to redeem the damned, as some have supposed, but to heaven; where he assures the thief he shall also be. It is the presence of Christ that makes heaven so glorious and happy. With this he consoled his mourning friends, John xiv. "I am going to prepare a place for you; and I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Amazing favour, "to be with Christ!" this is enough. He asked a bare remembrance, as if distant; Jesus promises his own immediate presence.

And, *how quickly* was this to be enjoyed! "To-day." He had prayed—"Lord, remember me *when* thou comest into thy kingdom." He knew not when that might be; perhaps he thought of some very distant time. Christ says, "to day." How short and speedy was this man's journey to glory! In the morning, he was posting to hell; in the evening, he is with Christ, in heaven. This scripture teaches us a pleasant truth, namely, that there is no interval, between the time of our departure from this world, by death, and our admission into the realms of glory. Some have dreamt that the soul sleeps till the resurrection; but Christ assures the thief, and assures *us* by the same word, of an immediate entrance into heaven; that so, being "absent from the body," we may be "present with the Lord."

Of all this, Jesus vouchsafes the most solemn assurance: he adds his usual asseveration "Verily." Perhaps he saw some rising doubts in the sinner's mind. The blessing

promised was so vast and unexpected; he might feel so much his own vileness and unworthiness, as to fear he should not obtain it; but, to put the matter out of all doubt, Christ adds a kind of oath to his promise, that so this "heir of promise might have strong consolation." And is not the scripture full of similar assurances, "that whosoever believeth in Jesus, shall not perish, but have everlasting life;" yea, more: "he that believeth *hath*," even now, "hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." "Wherefore then dost thou doubt, O thou of little faith?"

APPLICATION——1. Beware of abusing this glorious instance of free grace. Many have been very cautious in speaking of it, and have rather laboured to obscure its glory, by studying to find out something good in the character of the thief, lest this example of grace, purely free, and granted at the last hour, should have a dangerous tendency, and encourage men to defer their repentance; presumptuously hoping to be saved at the last moment, like the thief. But a sober consideration of the matter may prevent this abuse; while we must take care to do nothing to diminish the glory of divine grace, in this instance so illustriously displayed. It has been often and justly observed, "We have but *one* such instance recorded in all the Bible: *one* sinner converted at the hour of death, that we may hope; and *but one*, that we may fear." And, suppose it had once happened that a person had leaped down from a lofty precipice without losing his life, would it be prudent for ten thousand other people to run the risk, and leap down after him? Dreadfully hazardous, indeed it is, for men to presume on a death-bed repentance. "Repentance is the gift of God;" he is bound to bestow it at no time; and can it be reasonably expected at the close of a life of sin and rebellion? Let it be considered how many die suddenly, without a moment's warning; how many die on their beds, who are so flattered by their disorder or their friends, that they have no expectation at all of death. Others die in the delirium of a fever; or are otherwise disabled by extreme agony or weakness for serious reflection. And some die hardened, like the other thief on the cross; for, in general, men die as they live.

But, behold and admire the grace of God! Salvation is always of grace. Surely it was so in this instance. Sin indeed abounded, but grace superabounded. Whoever is saved, must be saved on the very same terms as the thief was, "justified freely, by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ;" "without money and without price;" "not of works, lest any man should boast." Boasting is always excluded in salvation, whoever is the subject of it. How eminently so here! *Who* was it that made one thief to differ from the other? Bishop Hall says, "Lord, he could not have spoken this *to* thee, but *by* thee. What possibility was there for a thief to think of thy kingdom without thy Spirit? That good Spirit of *thine* breathed upon *this* man, breathed *not* upon his fellow. Their trade was alike; their state alike; their sin was *like*; their cross alike; *only* thy mercy makes them *unlike*. One is taken, the other left. Blessed be thy *Mercy*, in taking one! Blessed be thy *Justice* in leaving the other! Who can despair of *that* mercy? who can but tremble at *that* justice?"

Let every sinner, who reads or hears this, know *he* needs mercy, just as much as this criminal. "But I am not a thief," says one. Perhaps you have not robbed *man*, but have you not "robbed *God*?" Have you not defrauded him of "the glory due to his name? Have you not robbed him of the Sabbath, a portion of time which he demands for his own service? Have you not embezzled his talents, which were given you to trade with, for the purposes of his honour, and your salvation?" Boast not, then, that you "have paid every *man* his own," when you have, in a thousand instances, defrauded the blessed God of his due. See then the necessity of mercy, and dread the thought of a double condemnation, the one for *sin*, and the other for *unbelief*.

May the goodness of God, so divinely displayed in this instance, draw thee to repentance. Jesus Christ "came, to seek and to save that which was lost." This was always his character, and he maintained it to the last. His enemies reproached him for it; they called him "the friend of sinners;" so he was; but not the friend of sin. Blessed be his name, he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for



ever." He casts out none that come. O come and try him. What encouragement is here for him "that is ready to perish;" who has a world of guilt, and not a grain of worthiness! Say, with the dying thief, "Lord, remember me, now thou art in thy kingdom," and he will find a place in Paradise for you, even for you.

This prayer will suit the Christian all his days, Lord, remember me. When guilt recurs; when temptations assault; when troubles arise; look to the Saviour. He who "remembered thee in thy low estate," will not forget thee now. Like the High Priest of old, he bears the names of all his people on his heart; and, though even a tender mother may forget her sucking child, yet he protests he will remember thee. In return, go thou and remember him.

## SERMON XXXVIII.

### THE WORLD TO COME.

LUKE XX. 35, 36....*But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.*

IT may justly excite our wonder and our grief, that believers, who are professed candidates for another world, should have their hearts so little set upon their heavenly home. The glory that shall be revealed, and which faith humbly expects, is so exceedingly great, that one should suppose the children of God would scarcely be able to think or speak of any thing else. But alas! it is not so. "Our soul cleaveth to the dust," and we have abundant cause to pray, "Quicken thou us, according to thy word." May the Lord bless our meditations on this passage of Scripture, in which Jesus Christ replies to the objections of the Sadducees against the doctrine of the resurrection! The Sadducees were the disciples of Sadoc, and composed one of the four sects of the Jews; their leading notion was, that "there is no resurrection;" ver. 27; they also denied the existence of angels, the immortality of the soul, and a future state. The Sadducees thought to perplex the doc-

trine of the resurrection, by proposing the case of a woman who had been married to seven different men. "In the resurrection, said they, whose wife of them is she?" Our Lord mildly answered this impertinent question, by showing that there is a vast difference between the state of men on earth, and that of the children of God in heaven; a great difference between this world, and that world. The whole passage is full of instruction, which we shall endeavour to obtain, by making several observations upon it.

Observe, I. There is another world.

Our Lord calls it *that* world: It is evidently opposed to "*this* world," ver. 34, "the children of *this* world." We know a little of *this* world. O that we knew aright? O that we saw it with the eyes of faith! We should then confess it to be *avain world*; "for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Solomon, who made a full trial of the world, with advantages for making it above all other men, solemnly pronounces the whole to be "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit." How emphatically is it expressed! as if his heart was full of the idea; as if he longed to impress it upon others; as if he could not find sufficient words to do it. And remember *who* it was that declared this. Not a hermit, who never saw the world: not a pauper, who has got nothing in the world: not a spendthrift, who has lost all he had in the world: but "the king of Jerusalem," who abounded in wealth and honour, and who had tried the whole round of worldly pleasures. If *he* pronounces all to be vanity, *We* need not make the fruitless experiment; for "what shall the man do who cometh after the King?"

This world is as *wicked* as it is vain. "This present *evil* world," St. Paul calls it; "The world that lieth in the wicked one," saith St. John. It was *good*, when God first made it, "very good;" but sin has made it evil; filled it with snares and sorrows; insomuch that it is a part of Christ's redemption, "to deliver us from this present evil world;" and from Satan, "the prince of this world," who makes use of its pleasures, as baits, to destroy the souls of men. And yet, such is the evil heart of man, that he dotes upon this evil world; he seeks "his good things."

in this world ;” “ his portion is in this life :” he is “ a man of the world ;” or, as Christ says, ver. 34. “ a child of this world.”

But there is *another world*. Solemn truth ! generally admitted, but little regarded. O think of it, you who trifle away your precious time. There is another world ; and though you forget it, you are hastening towards it every moment. Yes ! there is another world. Jesus Christ, who came from it, and who is gone to it again, Jesus Christ assures us of it. “ He has brought life and immortality *to light* ;” he has made a plain revelation of it in the Gospel, which shows us the *certainty* of it ; the sublime, excellent and spiritual *nature* of it, as in our text ; together with the true and only *way* of obtaining eternal life, which is by Jesus Christ. Our Lord in his public discourses often spoke of another world, of heaven, and of hell, very plainly, very familiarly, very solemnly ; urging his hearers, by arguments drawn from eternity, to regard the things which belonged to their peace.

The world of which we speak is a world of *light*, and *purity*, and *joy*. “ There is no night there.” Hell is eternal darkness. Heaven eternal light. No ignorance, no errors, no mistakes ; but the knowledge of God in Christ begun on earth, is there completed ; for “ we shall know even as we are known.” The heavenly world is all *purity* and holiness. Nothing retaining the defilement of sin, can have admission there ; only “ the pure in heart shall see God.” And there, *joy*, which also commenced on earth in the possession of “ spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus,” shall be full, uninterrupted and everlasting. “ God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying ; neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away.”

Such is *that world* our Lord here speaks of : and it is the grand object of faith. Believers in all ages have kept it in view. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, lived and died in the faith of it ; “ they desired *a heavenly country*,” and in the hope of it, were dead to this world ; “ confessing themselves strangers and pilgrims on earth.” The apostles “ having the same spirit of faith,” looked “ not at the things

which are seen ;" like archers, intently viewing the mark they shoot at ; their object was nothing visible and sensible ; but they " looked at the things unseen," they seriously regarded, and carefully aimed at heavenly things, as the grand mark, the noble prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus.

And is this the character of real christians ? Stop a moment, and ask, Is it your's ? Amidst the unavoidable labours and the lawful pleasures of this world, Is heaven the principal object ? Or do you wholly forget it ? It has scarcely even a place in your thoughts ; and can you suppose you shall ever enjoy glory without seeking it ? Be not deceived, for

Observe, II. It will be a great matter *to obtain* that world :

Notice our Saviour's words, " they which shall be accounted worthy *to obtain* that world." O it will be a great matter to obtain that world. Surely men do not believe there is such a world ; for faith, of any sort, will work. What is it sets the world of men in motion ? what makes them so busy from morning to night ? Is it not the belief that they shall obtain something worth their pains ? Why then are no pains taken to obtain heaven ? Infidelity lies at the bottom of their sloth, or people would seek heaven as diligently as they seek this present world. " So run," saith St. Paul, " that ye may obtain." " Know ye not, saith he, that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize ? So run that ye may obtain." 1 Cor. ix. 24. The christian life is a race, and heaven is the prize : and a race implies motion, vehement motion, and continued motion. O let us be in good earnest for heaven. Lazy wishes and formal religion will not do. Christ represents it as a great thing to obtain that world.

It will be a matter of amazing *grace* and favour. Labour, we must ; yet, after all, it is a matter of pure mercy, for " the gift of God is eternal life." Every glorified saint will be filled with surprise, and be ready to say, Lord is it I ?

" How can it be, thou heavenly King,  
That thou should'st me to glory bring  
Make slaves the partners of thy throne  
Deck'd with a never fading crown ?"



And O, what a matter of infinite *joy* will it be! If angels rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, it is because they foresee its final result; the foundation is laid, and they rejoice to think they shall witness the top stone laid also, and shall "shout Grace! Grace! unto it." Yea, the blessed Redeemer himself shall rejoice, "when he sees the travail of his soul;" he will reckon all his pains and sorrows and sufferings amply recompensed, when he beholds the millions of his elect safely brought to glory.

O then, let the obtaining of that world be our first business in this. So Christ directs—"Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" let care for heaven precede all other cares: Seek it *first*, seek it early in life; and seek it early every morning. Seek it earnestly as the chief thing, "for what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul." Heaven is all, and heaven will make amends for all.

Observe, III. Some kind of *worthiness* is necessary to the obtaining of that world—"they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world."

This worthiness includes *merit* and *meetness*; or, a *title* to glory, and a *fitness* for it. Both these are necessary. But where shall we look for merit? Not in man. Man is a sinner, and a sinner merits only hell, for "the wages of sin is death." "All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The best man in the world can lay no claim to heaven; if he could, there would be room for boasting: "but boasting is excluded." No flesh shall glory in his presence." If any man glory, it must be in the Lord. It is the merit, or, more properly speaking, the righteousness of Christ, which is the believer's title to heaven. This, like the wedding garment in the parable, is the only dress in which a sinner can appear before God, or sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

But there is a *meetness* or *fitness* for that world, which is equally necessary. St. Paul gives thanks to God, Col. i. 12. "who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Observe, Heaven is for *saints*, that is, *sanctified persons*; and they who are not saints on earth, will never be saints in heaven. All who are designed for heaven hereafter, are prepared for heaven now. On-

ly those who are sanctified shall be glorified. And this is evident to common sense. Every creature has its proper element. The fish cannot fly in the air, nor the bird swim in the water. And how can we suppose that the man who drinketh in iniquity like water, can be fit to be with angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, where all is pure and holy? A good man who was dying, said, "I shall change my place, but not my company?" Let them think of this, whose chosen company is the profane and the lewd. O how vain are the hopes which many persons entertain of future happiness! In vain the proud Pharisee, who talks of his good heart and his good works, expects a place among the redeemed; for their song is, not "worthy self;" but "worthy is the Lamb that was slain, who hath redeemed us to God by his blood." As vain are the hopes of the carnal and worldly man, whose affections cleave to earth, who lives in the love and practice of known iniquity, whose inmost soul abhors the spiritual life, who accounts the sabbath a burden, and who lives "without Christ in the world." Know, O vain man, thy hope is folly and presumption, and hear what Christ has declared with a double *Verily*—"Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii. 3.

But thrice happy are they who are prepared for heaven; who are "born of the Spirit," and made spiritual in the frame of their mind; whose hearts are weaned in some degree from earthly things; who possess the world as though they possessed it not; who have desires and affections suited to the work and delight of heaven: "He who hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God;" these are "the first fruits of the Spirit," the foretaste of heaven; and those who enjoy it shall be "accounted worthy to obtain that world."

Observe, IV. That the relations of the present world will not subsist in the world to come; our Lord says, *they neither marry nor are given in marriage.*

This expression is not intended to disparage that kind of union; for marriage was ordained of God himself, while yet our first parents retained their original innocence. This relation is the first that subsisted between human beings; it is the source of all other relations, and superior to

them all; for, "for this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife." And our Lord was so far from discouraging marriage, that he graced a marriage feast with his presence, and wrought his first miracle there.

But in heaven, this relation will cease; because the purposes for which it was instituted will also cease. There will be no death in heaven; consequently no vacancies, such as death here makes, to be filled up. In this world "one generation passeth away and another cometh." The world is like an inn, where travellers take an hasty refreshment, and are gone; while a succession of new travellers occupy their places. Where are the former inhabitants of this place? they are mingled with the dust, the places which knew them, know them no more: We who are present supply their room; and, in a short time, another generation shall succeed us. But the inhabitants of heaven dwell in a "continuing city," "a house not made with hands, whose builder and maker is God;" yea, they are like "pillars in his temple, and shall no more go out."

The blessed God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, has been pleased to appoint marriage as a remedy against fornication, that natural desires might not become brutal, but be under direction and controul. Alas! what abominations spring from the neglect of this remedy! what impurities, what excesses, what poverty, what disease, what infamy, what bloodshed, what misery have abounded in the world, by the unbridled lusts of the sexes! And, O how few consider that "for all these things God will bring them into judgment!" But in the heavenly world, those who were on earth purified in measure, shall be perfectly pure; the body of sin and death shall also be purged in the grave; and no disorderly passions, nor sensual appetites shall ever molest them again.

Nor shall the glorified need the aid of that domestic friendship and comfort which result from the married state, and which are well suited to our embodied state; for even in Paradise the Creator judged "it was not good for man to be alone." But in heaven there will be no occasion for the lesser streams of happiness, when believers have arrived at the fountain. In that blessed state, "the

tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Rev. xxi. 3. And it is added, ver. 22. "the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." God, in Christ, will be the everlasting fountain of knowledge and joy; so that the aid of creature comforts shall no more be wanted, than the light of a candle at noon day.

O let us learn from hence to sit loose to all creatures and creature comforts; "it remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." 1 Cor. vii. 29.

Observe, V. In that world, *death* will be for ever abolished.

This is a dying world. We are placed as in a field of battle, our relations and neighbours are falling all around us, so that we may almost say—"Where is the earth that hath not been alive?" Death is to mortals "The king of terrors." Many thoughtless creatures, indeed, will hardly allow themselves to think of it; but, when it approaches, what agonies and terrors seize their souls; sin is neither pardoned nor subdued, and preparation for eternity is not begun. Even some of the timid flock of Christ, weak in the faith, are, inconsistently with the glorious Gospel they profess, too much in bondage through fear of death. But *Christ hath abolished death*, 2 Tim. i. 11. He hath taken away its sting, and changed its very nature, turning the curse into a blessing; and as to the second death, far more dreadful than the first, it is lost and gone for ever: *He that believeth shall never die—believest thou this?* John xi. Instead of death, eternal life is the believer's portion; even now the christian hath it, and it shall be perfected at the resurrection, when this mortal shall put on immortality. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Let this reconcile us to death. We shall die but once. It alleviates the distress of some bodily disorders, as the small-pox for instance, that persons suffer them but once,



and are not liable to have them again. It is a far greater satisfaction which Christ affords us in our text, *Neither shall they die any more*; especially as death itself is also become a privilege; it is the gate of life, and ushers us into his presence, where "there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

Observe, VI. The blessed inhabitants of that world shall be like the Angels; *they are equal to the angels*.

Angels are spiritual beings, not having bodies as we have, but possessing rational powers superior to our's. They are pure and holy beings, having never rebelled against God, as their fallen brethren the devils have, and as we the children of men have. They do the will of God with pleasure, and are the messengers of God's mercy to men; "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be the heirs of salvation."

At present, we are far inferior to angels, not only in our natural powers, but especially in holiness and purity. We inhabit a body of sin and death, and, by our connexion with a system of flesh and blood, are greatly hindered in our spiritual pursuits, and disposed to evil. Thus the apostle speaks, Rom. vii. 22, &c. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man, (the renewed mind) but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members;" and on this account he cries, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" All believers have daily cause to make the same complaint; "for the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, so that they cannot do the things that they would." On this ground, our suffering Saviour kindly apologized for his sleeping disciples in the garden; "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak."

But our Lord here assures his people they shall be equal with the angels; they shall drop the clog of their mortal bodies, and lose the incumbrance of flesh and blood; no sensual appetites shall divert their affections from spiritual objects; but, with the same agility and spirituality as the angels themselves, they shall serve their dear Lord, day and night in his temple, and be supremely happy in the full enjoyment of God and the Lamb.

O let us endeavour to resemble angels now, as much as possible. We are taught to pray, "thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven;" and that we may do it, let us not indulge our sensual appetites too much, but, with St. Paul, "bring our bodies into subjection, and keep them under."

Observe, VII. The resurrection of the body will perfect the bliss of God's people; *they are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection; they shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead.*

The heavenly felicity of believers shall commence at the moment of death. No sooner are they "absent from the body," but they are "present with the Lord;" but their bliss will not be consummated till the morn of the resurrection. In the prospect of this, holy Job says, *All the days of my appointed time, (that is, in the grave,) will I wait till my change come; (glorious change it will be! for the Lord will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body.) Thou shalt call, saith he, and I will answer thee, (for the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God) thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.* Job xiv.

14. The human body is the exquisite workmanship of God's hand; and being redeemed by Jesus Christ, as well as the soul, it shall be rescued from the power of the grave. Then *the creature*, the corporal part of the christian, which had long been made subject to vanity, "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God." This is the "manifestation of the sons of God," when they shall appear like themselves, and like their glorious Redeemer. This is also called "the adoption." Believers are now the adopted sons of God; but this dignity is denied by the world, and sometimes obscured to themselves: But then God will own and publish it before all the world, and the matter will be put beyond dispute. Their bodies then shall be as much more glorious than those of the wicked, as their souls are now more gracious than theirs. And as Christ was by his resurrection "declared to be the Son of God with power," so shall his humble followers be. Rom. viii. 19—23.

Thus we have taken a distant view of the future world, of which so many useful hints are suggested in the text. Let us daily walk as expectants of another world. Let us remember it will be a great matter to obtain that world. Let us recollect what that worthiness is, which is requisite to the obtaining of it, namely, the righteousness of Christ, and the sanctifying influence of the Spirit. Let us remember, that human relations and connexions, however useful and comfortable at present, will cease at death; but that death itself shall also be abolished. Let us enjoy the thought of being holy, happy, and spiritual, like the blessed angels; and try to resemble them now in our cheerful and active obedience. Finally, in the prospect of a glorious resurrection, let us "be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord."

## SERMON XXXIX.

SAFETY IN THE ARK FOR PERISHING SINNERS.

GEN. vii. 1.....*Come, thou, and all thy house, into the Ark.*

**T**HIS is the gracious invitation which God gave to Noah, just before the flood came upon the world of the ungodly. The world had been formed about 1500 years, and the number of mankind was greatly multiplied. But wickedness also greatly increased, until the wrath of God was dreadfully kindled, and he determined upon the general destruction of sinners. "And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth, for it repenteth me that I have made him." But Noah, who amidst the general depravity, was righteous and pious, "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." To him he made known his designs, an hundred and twenty years before the flood; and directed him to build an immense vessel, like the hulk of a ship, in which himself and his family should be preserved. Noah believed and obeyed. The ark was ready, and the deluge was at hand. "Then the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou, and all thy

house, into the ark." Noah entered. The Lord shut him in. The flood prevailed. Mankind was destroyed. Noah and his family continue a year in the ark in safety, are then released from their confinement, and become the founders of a new world.

There is much instruction to be gathered from this affecting history ; and it affords a lively type or emblem of the salvation that is in Christ for perishing sinners. It is still the determination of the Holy God to punish the ungodly. He gives them warning, and allows them time and space for repentance. He has also provided an ark for the preservation of those who foresee their danger ; and by the Gospel he invites sinners to fly to this refuge. Happy they, who, like Noah, believe, and obey, and are saved. For the sake of order and of memory, we shall divide our discourse into three parts, and observe,

I. There is a deluge of wrath coming upon sinners.

II. There is an ark provided for preservation.

III. God graciously invites sinners to come into it.

I. There is a dreadful deluge of wrath coming upon the ungodly. Sin only was the cause of the flood in Noah's time, and sin will bring upon every impenitent unpardoned soul, a more dreadful punishment. " By one man sin entered into the world," and that man lived long enough to witness its rapid growth ; he lived to see the world peopled with men, and over-run with wickedness. But in the family of *Seth*, from which it was designed that the Saviour should come, the fear and worship of God was long preserved. While these continued separate from the posterity of Cain, there was a seed to serve the Lord. But at length this distinction ceased : for " the sons of God (the children of Seth) saw the daughters of men (the posterity of Cain) that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose." The professors of religion married the profane ; they were " unequally yoked with unbelievers ;" and what was the consequence ? Iniquity increased faster than ever : " The bad will sooner debauch the good, than the good reform the bad." Wickedness became triumphant, and many seem to have been giants in sin as well as in size. " And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the



thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The earth also was corrupt before God; and the earth was full of violence, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." The Lord who saw all this was greatly displeased; and, speaking after the manner of man, "he repented that he had made man, and it grieved him at his heart." The blessed God cannot be disturbed by any uneasy passion; but these expressions signify his extreme displeasure against sin and sinners; they show that sin is most odious to his holiness, and sinners most obnoxious to his justice. Being thus provoked to anger, he said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is *flesh*;" that is, wholly fleshly, carnally minded, entirely sensual, sunk in fleshly lust. He therefore determined on the utter destruction of all mankind by an universal deluge. Yet he is pleased to give warning of it, and suspend the threatened ruin for one hundred and twenty years, which, as men then lived about nine hundred years, was such a reprieve to them, as nine or ten years would be to us.

Men and brethren, sin is the same evil and destructive thing now that it was then. God is equally angry with sinners; and though he does not generally execute his wrath upon them in this world, yet he will assuredly do it in the world to come. Hear what the holy, fiery law of God saith to every transgressor. Gal. iii. 10. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* The condition of life by the law is personal, perpetual, perfect obedience to all its commands, doing all things required, and doing them always, without one omission, without one transgression. A single failure, even in thought, spoils a whole life of obedience, and incurs the curse. You will say then, upon these terms, who can be saved? We answer none. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." It is a vain thing therefore to look for life by the law, or our good works, as they are called; if ever we escape the curse, it must be through faith in Jesus Christ, who "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The whole book of God is full of threatenings against sin. It declares that "the wicked shall be turned into hell;" that "if the wicked turn not, he will whet his

sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready; he hath prepared the instruments of death." Psalm vii. 11, &c. What awful words are these! You tremble to see a criminal just ready for execution: behold, the instruments of eternal death are ready. And this is your own case at this very moment, if you are yet in your sins. "The wrath of God abideth upon you; and, the longer you live in sin, the more are you "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

How merciful was God in giving warning to the old world. His servant Noah was a preacher of righteousness. The Spirit of Christ was in him, and by this Spirit he preached to the disobedient and rebellious sinners of that time, as St. Peter speaks, 1 Pet. iii. 19. *By which (Spirit) he went and preached to the spirits in prison; which some time were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing.* Christ, by his Spirit in Noah, was the preacher. The hearers, were the wicked people of the world in Noah's days, but when Peter wrote this they were *spirits*; disembodied spirits *in prison*, that is, in the prison of hell; so that they were not only drowned but damned. This passage therefore does not mean that they were in prison when Christ preached to them, as the Papists pretend: but Christ, by his Spirit, preached to them on earth; yet, alas! to no purpose. Noah might say, with the apostles and others, "Who hath believed our report?" They were disobedient! they did not regard the merciful warning; and very probably despised and ridiculed Noah for his faith, his preaching, and his building. Thousands would come to see the ark, and ask him what it was for; they would ask him whether he meant to sail on dry land; or, where so much water must come from as would drown the world? Such a thing, they would say, is quite contrary to reason, such a thing never was, nor never can be; and no doubt they would say Noah was righteous over-much, and religion had turned his brain.

In the very same manner the merciful warnings of God are treated to this day. Serious religion is despised. Holiness is accounted needless preciseness; and *the terrors of*

**T**he Lord, by which we would persuade men, are reckoned idle bugbears, fit only to alarm weak people and children. Thus unbelief tends to eternal ruin and destruction : for no person will fly from the wrath to come, who does not believe wrath is coming ; who does not believe God, who says it is coming. But this very unbelief fulfils the Scriptures. St. Peter says, " In the last days there shall be *scoffers* walking after their own lust, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." But this is false. The world was once destroyed by water, and it shall be again by fire. Not only does the Scripture assure us of the deluge, but almost all nations retain a tradition of it ; and we may see the traces of it with our own eyes. The trees which are found in the bowels of the earth ; and the shells and bones of fishes dug out of mountains remote from the sea, are ocular proofs of this event. But sin hardens the hearts of men, and they will not believe till they feel. Our Saviour tells us it will be just the same at the day of judgment. Matt. xxiv. 37, &c. " But as the days of Noah were, so shall " also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the " days that were before the flood, they were eating and " drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the " day that Noah entered into the ark ; and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

*They knew not*—mark the expression! *They knew not*. How could they help knowing, when they were told of it for 120 years? The meaning is—*they believed not*. They might have known but they would not know ; they would not believe ; they reasoned themselves out of it. Just so do sinners now. They love sin, and they will not believe that God will punish it ; which is, in fact, saying that God is a liar, and will not do as he has said. They were secure because they were sensual ; they were eating and drinking, minding the things that were seen, and so neglecting the things that were not seen.

Nevertheless, " the flood came, and took them all away." " If we believe not, God abideth faithful ; he cannot deny himself." " Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his

words shall not pass away." Whatever God threatens or promises is sure to come to pass. The flood came. Then they saw what they would not believe. The day of mercy was ended. There was no hope for them ; no means of escape ; but they miserably perished in the mighty waters.

Let us now turn our eyes from this dreadful scene, to contemplate the goodness of God towards Noah and his family ; let us consider,

## II. The ark provided for his preservation.

God himself devised this means of safety. He directed him to build a vessel of immense size, and pointed out all the dimensions of it. Proper rooms were to be made for his family, and others for a small remnant of all other creatures, who were thus to be preserved from the universal desolation.\*

Thus the salvation of the church is by a plan of God's own contrivance. The method of salvation by Jesus Christ is wholly of God. It could never have entered into the heart of man. No human or angelic being could ever have thought of God's taking our nature into union with his own ; or have devised the astonishing plan of redemption by the blood of his Son. So remote is this method from the wisdom of man, that he calls it " foolishness ;" but it is " the wisdom of God : " yea, " the manifold wisdom of God : " is therein displayed ; and it will be the admiration of saints and angels to all eternity.

As fallen man is totally ruined, it is necessary that his restoration should be in such a way as to secure the whole glory of it to God alone. And so it does. In the Redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ, " Grace reigns," from first to last. Grace devised the charming plan. Grace gave Jesus, the unspeakable gift. It is by grace we are called. By grace we are justified. We are sanctified,

\* Infidels have pretended that the ark was not big enough to hold all the creatures, &c. but it appears from the calculations of learned men that it was amply sufficient. It was about 550 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 50 feet high ; so that it contained near 45,000 tons of lading, and would hold more than 40 of our ships of 1000 tons each. It was nearly as long as St. Paul's Church in London. And if all the animals together, as the learned have computed, would not be equal to 500 horses, there would surely be room enough and to spare.



by grace. By grace we are preserved : and the top stone of salvation, in the everlasting glory of the elect shall be brought forth, shouting Grace ! Grace ! unto it.

It was the same grace that selected Noah from the great mass of the profane and wicked of that day. The nature of Noah was no better than that of others, but grace made him to differ. It is said, Gen. vi. 8, “ Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” The like expression is used concerning Lot. When Sodom was destroyed, he was delivered—“ the Lord being merciful to him.” The salvation of the best men must be ascribed to God’s mercy, not their own merit. Onesiphorus was a good man, but St. Paul prayed for him, “ that he might find mercy of the Lord at the last day :” and it will then be manifest, with respect to all the redeemed, that it was “ not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” Rom. ix. 15, 16.

The ark afforded perfect security. Noah being forewarned of the approaching flood, and having received full instructions how to build the ark, believed God and obeyed. St. Paul, treating of faith, Heb. xi. mentions him as an eminent believer. “ By faith, Noah, being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house ; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is of faith.” Here is the way of salvation. God warns. The Christian believes the warning. He fears the misery threatened. He flies to the refuge provided, and there he is safe.

Believing that God would do as he said, he began to build the ark. It was a work of great labour, but he did not shun it on that account. It was an unexampled thing : he had no precedent for it ; and it required no small courage and resolution to persist in the work. Reason might hesitate and form objections, but “ the Lord hath said it,” was an answer to them all. The world would despise him, and treat him as a visionary romantic fool, who frightened himself, and wanted to frighten others, with ungrounded danger ; but the power of faith carried him through every difficulty, and at the appointed season he

received the end of his faith, even the salvation of himself and his family.

For now, the hundred and twenty years are just expired. The long expected day is just at hand—"for yet seven days, said the Lord, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth." Here was a fresh warning. While the time was distant they disregarded it. But now there is only a week to turn themselves in; and this week was spent like the rest. We do not hear of one person converted in the last week. The week is expired. And now the rain descends, not in drops, but torrents; and not for a few hours, but for six weeks together, without intermission. And not only were "the windows of heaven opened," but "the foundations of the great deep were broken up"—the great abyss of waters under the earth, which hitherto God had confined by certain bounds, "that they might not pass over to cover the earth." Psalm civ. 9. But now these bounds are removed, and the water covers the surface of the land.

"Probably, many of the profane scoffers, when they saw the encreasing violence of the waters, came wading middle deep to the ark, earnestly craving admittance; but as they formerly rejected God, now they are justly rejected by him. Ere vengeance begins, repentance is seasonable; but if judgment be once gone out, we cry too late. While the Gospel solicits us, the doors of the ark are open; if we neglect the time of grace, in vain we seek it with tears. God holds it no mercy to pity the obstinate. Others, more bold than they, hope to over-run the judgment; and climbing up to the high mountains, look down upon the waters with more hope than fear. And now when they see their hills become islands, they climb up into the tallest trees; there with paleness and horror look for death, and study to avoid it, whom the waves overtake at last, half dead with famine, and half with fear. Lo! now from the tops of the mountains they descry the ark floating upon the waters, and behold with envy that which before they beheld with scorn."

In the mean time Noah sits secure in the ark. The

torrents of rain battering on the roof, the swelling of the waves which bore him up, the bellowing of the dying beasts, and the shrieks of the expiring multitude, create neither disturbance nor fear. He who "shut him in," had promised preservation; and while all was horror without, within all was safety, and peace, and praise.

And, who ever trusted in the Lord and was confounded? See the blessed effects of faith. "There is no condemnation to them who are in *Christ Jesus*," as Noah was in the ark. The law may thunder out its fearful curse. Satan, unwilling to lose his prey may rage and roar. The world, condemned by the believer's faith, as once by Noah's, may frown, and fret and persecute; but the believer is safe. "The law of the spirit of life, in *Christ Jesus*, hath made him free from the law of sin and death." "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation;" and, well may he triumph over the world, for Christ hath said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome it." Yea, when the king of terrors himself shall advance, secure in Christ the life, he may say, "O death, where is thy sting?"

O how enviable, to the distressed multitude, was now the favoured situation of Noah. But, alas! it was too late. The same almighty hand which shut him in, had shut them out. Blessed be God it is not so yet with any of us. The door of the ark is yet open; and the language of the Gospel is, "Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark." This is what we are now to consider.

III. God graciously invites sinners to come into the ark.

When the mighty waters were fast increasing; when no hope appeared from any other quarter; how would it have rejoiced the people to hear such an invitation as this: "Come, perishing men and women. Come into the ark. Come, and bring all your dear little ones with you. Here is room enough and to spare; and here you shall find a hearty welcome."

*They* were not favoured thus: But *we* are called. "Go ye forth into all the world," said Christ to his disciples, "and preach the Gospel to every creature." And what is this Gospel, but good news of a refuge from the storm, and a covert from the tempest? Pardon, safety, and eter-

nal life to every believer? Christ, the ordinance of God for complete salvation, to every one who sees his need of him, and wants to "fly from the wrath to come." So Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness: the people stung by fiery serpents beheld it and lived. So the Israelites in Egypt sprinkled their doors with blood, and the angel of death, who destroyed their enemies, beheld the peaceful sign, and preserved their lives. To this moment the gracious Redeemer is crying aloud by his word, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Come into the ark, thou and all thy house. Parents, come not alone. Ask your sons and daughters to come along with you. They will be welcome, for Jesus still saith, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." O may God make you and them willing to come into the ark!

APPLICATION.—*How kind is God!* Kind, in warning sinners so long before hand, of their dreadful danger. Kind, in providing an ark; in giving his Son to be a Saviour. Kind, in inviting perishing men to come and be saved by him. O praise the Lord for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.

But are we aware of the danger? Do we really believe there is a deluge of wrath coming upon sinners? Here most men fail. Sin is so pleasant, they are unwilling to think it destructive. But who shall we believe, the God of truth, or the father of lies? See the fate of these unbelievers. They would not believe God, and were therefore secure: but the flood came and took them all away. But Noah believed, was moved with fear, built an ark, and was saved. You have no ark to build. It is built already. Yet a few days and the flood will come. Have not some large drops of affliction already fallen, to give you the necessary alarm? Lose no time then. The very beasts will hurry home when a storm is at hand. O seek a shelter in Jesus, and no where else. Neither the mountains nor the trees could save the unbelievers of old. Nor is there a saving name in heaven or earth but that of Jesus. Come thou then into the ark.

And what say the rest of your house? Shall the husband come, and the wife be shut out? or the wife enter,



and the husband be excluded? Or, dear young people! shall your parents be safe in the ark, and you their children perish in the water? God forbid! O families, be concerned to be saved altogether. Come thou and *all* thy house into the ark; *servants* and all. If one be left behind, he perishes for ever. God make you willing to be saved.

And you, believers in Jesus, who are safe in the ark, rejoice in your security. Who can conceive what must have been the grateful feelings of Noah's heart when the Lord shut him in; and especially, when all was over, and he came safely out: Such, however, are the grateful feelings of a believer safe in Christ, and a believer safe in glory. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

## SERMON XL.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

PHILIP, iii. 8.....*The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus in Lord.*

**L**IFE is short! It is a most serious reflection, Life is short! The weakness and folly of childhood, the vanity and vices of youth, the bustle and care of middle life, and the infirmities of old age (if we live to be old) what do they leave us? A short life indeed!

Yet, man has a soul of vast desires. He is capable of much, and aims at more. Many things he cannot attain, and many are not worth the pains. O, 'tis pity, that man should not know how to chuse the good and refuse the evil; how to make the most and the best of so short a life!

Now, there is an infallible guide. O that man would regard it! Once hath God spoken, yea, twice have I heard this—what is the chief end, the first business, the true interest of man?

Job was a man, truly wise and eminently good: he had deeply considered the nature and value of wisdom; but, he enquires, Where is it to be got? Men know where to get gold and silver; and get them they will, if possible, though at the hazard of life. *But where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?* All na-

ture falters in giving an answer ; but God himself vouchsafes to give it. *To man, he said*, perhaps to Adam the first man : however to us, to every man of us, he says, *The fear of the Lord, behold, that is wisdom, and, to depart from evil, that is understanding.* True religion is the true wisdom.

SOLOMON, deemed the wisest of men, speaks the same language ; and thus concludes his book of dear-bought wisdom. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter ; of what matter ?* The subject he proposed in the beginning of his book. What is the chief good ? *What is that good for the sons of men, which they should do all the days of their life ?* (Eccl. ii. 3.) And here we have it. *Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man, or rather the whole of man ;* his highest wisdom, his proper duty, his true excellence, his best interest.

But a greater than Solomon is here. What saith JESUS, “ the Wisdom of God,” Wisdom incarnate ? *This is life eternal that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,* (John xvii. 3.) as if he had said, The way to eternal life ; the earnest of it ; the evidence of right and title to it ; and the final enjoyment of it ; consists in, and is connected with, the knowledge of the only true God, in opposition to all false gods ; and in the like knowledge of Christ his Son, the only Mediator and Saviour, in opposition to every other mediator, or pretended way of acceptance with God.

In our text, St. Paul adds his testimony to the former ; the testimony of his own experience. He was a man of learning, and had been a zealot for the Jewish law, a hater of Christ, and a bloody persecutor of his church ; but grace had renewed his mind and changed his heart ; he no longer boasted of his works, or went about to establish his own righteousness ; but the law became his schoolmaster to bring him to Christ ; through the law, he became dead to the law ; now he desires to be found in Christ, and depends alone on his righteousness.

What things were *gain* to him, he counted *loss* for Christ ; and that, not only at his first conversion, but many years after, when he wrote this epistle, he was still of the same mind. “ Yea, doubtless,” saith he, “ I count all

things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He gladly parted with all his carnal confidence, all his former reputation, and all his worldly enjoyments, for this excellent knowledge; and thought himself an immense gainer by the change.

The true knowledge of Christ is as excellent as ever. We ought to value it as much as Paul did; and that we may do so, let us consider,

1. What this knowledge is; and

2. The excellency of it.

I. Let us shew what this knowledge is.

We may consider the knowledge of Christ as opposed to *Paganism*, to *Judaism*, and to the merely *Notional religion* of formal professors.

The knowledge of Christ stands opposed to the ignorance of the heathen. "The world by wisdom knew not God." (1 Cor. i. 21.) The wisest Pagans, by their natural light and boasted philosophy, did not attain a true knowledge of God, and the way of salvation; "they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened." Witness, not only their altar "to the unknown God," but also the multitude of idols they worshipped; the absurd notions they entertained of their gods; and the horrid, bloody, and obscene rights of their worship.

The knowledge of Christ is to be distinguished from the knowledge of the Law of Moses. "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." The religion of the Jews consisted much in rites and ordinances, which were obscure, compared with the religion of the Gospel. They had "the shadow of good things to come," we have the substance.

This knowledge is also something far superior to the speculative, unsanctified notions of nominal christians, "who profess they know God, but in works deny him;" who have "the form of godliness, but deny the power;" who "name the name of Christ, but depart not from iniquity;" and to whom Christ will say, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you." That knowledge which Paul so much prized was truly valuable

and useful, and indeed, includes the whole of true vital religion. We may define it to be

*A spiritual, supernatural, experimental and practical knowledge of Christ, in his person, character, and work ; as revealed in the Gospel.*

It is *spiritual*. It is the work of the Spirit of God to communicate it—"God shines into the heart." Believers have "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ:" (Eph. i.) and the words which he speaks to the soul "are spirit and life:" "it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." John vi.

It is therefore *supernatural* ; it is above nature. No man can give it ; no natural man can receive it. We are assured, 1 Cor. ii. 14. that *the natural man*, (that is the animal or rational man ; he who acts only upon principles of reason,) *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God* ; that is, he does not embrace and approve them ; *for they are foolish to him* : through the darkness, pride, sensuality and depravity of his mind, he cannot reconcile them to his own mistaken views of things ; and therefore condemns them as weak, irrational, enthusiastic : the apostle adds ; *neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* : for want of a renewed faculty he cannot receive them ; for they are perceived in their divine truth, beauty and glory, only by an understanding illuminated and rectified by the Spirit of God. What an eminent instance of this was St. Paul himself. Before conversion, no man hated the Gospel more ; after conversion, no man loved it better ; and, to this day, the change that takes place in the minds of men respecting gospel-truth is little less remarkable.

It is *experimental*. Believers receive the love of the truth ; they "taste that the Lord is gracious ;" "as new born babes they desire the sincere milk of the word ;" the faith which they mix with the word, gives a subsistence and reality to the truth in their minds ; so that it greatly differs from a bare speculation ; the truth is in them, and the truth makes them free. Once more,

It is *practical*. Knowledge in scripture, is sometimes put for the whole of religion, and forms the grand distinction between the church and the world. Hence wicked men are often said "not to know the Lord ;" as the sons



of Eli, for instance, though they certainly had a speculative knowledge of the whole law. Knowledge often includes all its proper effects, as *assent* to the truth known; *affiance* in the person known; and that *love* to him, which secures obedience. Thus St. John speaks, Eph. i. 3, 4. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him: and, thereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."

The knowledge we speak of, and which St. Paul so much commends, is, the knowledge of CHRIST. Christ is the object of it; *Christ Jesus, my Lord*. It is a principal part of this knowledge to have right views of him; accordingly we find our Lord himself catechising his disciples upon this point. Matt. xvi. "Whom do men say, that I, the Son of Man, am?" and again, "Whom say ye that I am?" To others he said, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?" Peter answered, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." This was a good answer, and he greatly commended it, saying "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." His knowledge of the person of Christ was supernatural: and, our Lord, further to shew the importance of it, adds—"Thou art *Peter*;" (which signifies a *rock*,) and having mentioned his name, takes occasion to speak of this confession he made, this article of faith, as the rock, or foundation, on which the whole New-Testament Church shall be built. Indeed this is "the pillar and ground of truth; and without doubt, the great mystery of godliness, that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh;" "the Word made flesh, who dwelt among us."

The character, office, or work of Christ, is of equal importance. St. Paul's resolution was, "to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Christ as crucified: as a sacrifice and atonement, was his darling topic: though it was a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, he knew it to be "the power of God to salvation;" and, indeed, the names he mentions in the text include much the same: *Christ Jesus, my Lord*. The word *Christ* signifies *Anointed*. Priests, and others, used to be

anointed with oil, which denoted their fitness for the office, and their appointment to it; so Christ was anointed by the Father, filled with the Holy Spirit, and set apart by divine authority, to be the prophet, priest, and king of the church. The name *Jesus* signifies a *Saviour*; it was given him "because he should save his people from their sins." And the apostle adds, *my Lord*: he acknowledges him to be the sovereign ruler of his people, head over all things; and calls him *his*, because he was his sworn servant.

The knowledge of Christ, includes an acquaintance with his whole character, as drawn out in the New Testament. Here we see his innocence, his benevolence, his zeal, and especially his regard to poor sinners; how readily he listened to the cry of misery, how graciously he relieved the sick, the poor, and the guilty, when they applied to him; in a word, we see his glory, "the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

But the knowledge of Christ also includes *faith* in him; according to that scripture, Isa. liii. 11. *By his knowledge, shall my righteous servant justify many*: this cannot mean the knowledge that is in Christ, but the knowledge of Christ that is in his people; and so stands for faith, which alone justifies a sinner in the sight of God. The true knowledge of Christ is always accompanied with faith in him, for "they that know his name will put their trust in him."

This then is that knowledge which St. Paul attained, and which he prized so highly, that he said, "I count all things but loss" on account of it. Surely it must be most excellent in itself and in its effects, to be preferred above all things. If we saw a man willingly parting with all his property; selling his furniture, his house, his land, for the sake of buying one single article; we must conclude, if we had a good opinion of his prudence, that the article was of extraordinary value. And this is no more than the Christian is expected to do, according to our Lord's parable, Matt. xiii. 45. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant, seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Such a merchant was our apostle. May divine grace make us such also! That we may see the wisdom of his conduct. Let us now proceed to consider,

## II. *The excellency of this knowledge of Christ.*

1. It is the most *necessary* kind of knowledge. Of many things we must be ignorant, because we cannot attain the knowledge of them; and of many things we may safely be ignorant: but the knowledge of Christ is necessary to salvation. "That the soul be without knowledge, is not good." Prov. xix. 2. There can be no *faith* in Jesus without it, and without faith, no salvation. There can be no *love* to Jesus without it, and if no love, no salvation. Indeed we may see how necessary it is, by the pains which Satan takes to prevent the attainment of it; for he, as the god of this world, hath blinded the eyes of men, lest they should get this knowledge, by the Gospel. On the other hand, we learn its necessity from Christ's zeal to extend the word of salvation; for God our Saviour "will have all men (that is *all sorts* of men) to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. ii. 4. Observe, They must have the knowledge of the truth, in order to their being saved.

2. It is the most *heavenly* kind of knowledge. Every good gift comes down from God, but this especially. He who first created light in the world, "shines into the heart of man." It is the Holy Spirit who takes the things of Christ, and shews them unto us. It is written in the prophets, and daily fulfilled in the church: "All thy children shall be taught of God." The Spirit of God is the great teacher; but he teaches by the word. "To expect that the Spirit will teach you without the word, is rank enthusiasm; as great madness as to hope to see without eyes; and to expect that the word will teach you without the Spirit, is as great an absurdity as to pretend to see without light. God has joined the word and the Spirit together, and let no man put them asunder." We read of having "the eyes of our understanding enlightened." (Eph. i. 18.) and we read also of Christ's "opening the understanding of his disciples, that they might understand the scriptures." It therefore becomes every one who wishes for this heavenly knowledge, to pray with David, "O Lord, open mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law."

3. It is the most *useful* kind of knowledge. Every kind of knowledge is useful in its place, for it is to the mind what light is to the eyes; but this knowledge exceeds all other in its blessed effects. What was it that made so vast an alteration in the heathen world, so that from beasts and devils they became holy saints and children of God? It was the Gospel, which “opened their eyes, and turned them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Hereby thousands and thousands escape the pollutions of the world. In this consists much of our regeneration; for the new man is “renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.” Col. iii. 10. And this renewing work is carried on by the same means; “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory.” As the face of Moses got a heavenly lustre by converse with God, so, by the clear view of Christ’s glory, in the looking-glass of the Gospel, we ourselves obtain something of his own amiable and holy likeness. O, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, which makes us like Christ! and, depend upon it, the more you know him, the more you will be like him.

This knowledge will humble the soul. Other knowledge puffeth up. The rays of the sun, which show its own glory, discover the uncleanness of a room into which they shine; so this excellent knowledge at once makes manifest the glory of Christ, and the deformity of the sinner. *Isaiah*, upon beholding Christ, the Lord of Hosts, cries out, “Woe is me! I am unclean.” *Job* also exclaims, “Behold I am vile:” and John fell at his glorious Saviour’s feet as one dead.

We observed before that this knowledge is connected with *faith*: “they that know thy name will put their trust in thee.” “It would be arrant folly to trust a stranger with our all, but the knowledge of Christ encourages the soul to confide in him. *In whom ye trusted; after that ye heard the word of truth*, saith St. Paul to the Ephesians. None can trust him till they know him, and whoever knows him aright will trust him. Well may we trust him when we consider his almighty power, his infinite love, his divine righteousness, and his perfect faithfulness. In the view



of these, Paul, in the prospect of death, could say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day." If we had a thousand souls we might safely trust Jesus with them all.

4. This knowledge is, of all others, the most *pleasant*. Knowledge, in general, is grateful to the mind; and yet some kinds of knowledge are painful. Solomon says, "In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Eccl. i. 18. There must be a great deal of pains to get it, and a great deal of care to keep it; the more we know, the more we see remains to be known; and the more we perceive of the folly, madness, and misery of men. But there are no such inconveniencies attending this knowledge; it is more easily attained; and he that increaseth it, increaseth his joy at the same time. "I rejoice at thy word," saith the Psalmist, "as he that findeth great spoil." "The law of thy mouth is to me better than gold or silver." "Thy word was found of me, and I did eat it, and it was the joy and rejoicing of my heart." What support does the afflicted Christian find in the Gospel of Christ! he may say, "Thy statutes have been my song in the days of my pilgrimage." Hear Paul and Silas singing aloud at midnight, in the jail of Philippi; It was the knowledge of Christ that made them sing. And thousands of dying believers have rejoiced in Christ, amidst the pains of dissolving nature, and even in the flames of martyrdom. How excellent then is this knowledge of Christ!

\* APPLICATION—Is the knowledge of Christ so excellent, then, *Do we possess it?* St. Paul said to the Corinthians—"Some of you have not the knowledge of God: I speak it to your shame;" and a shame indeed it is, for those who have the means of knowledge, to remain destitute of it. And it is more than a shame, it is a sin; and a sin of the most fatal kind; it keeps us from the exercise of repentance, faith, love and obedience: yea, our Lord makes it the grand cause of final ruin. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."<sup>2</sup>

O think of this, while opportunity remains to obtain the knowledge of Christ. Seek it in the means of his appointment. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God." Seek it earnestly, according to the divine direction. Prov. iii. 3, 4. "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; for the Lord giveth wisdom, he layeth up *sound wisdom* for the righteous."

And, O what cause have they for thankfulness, who have obtained this "*sound wisdom*," this most excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ! You cannot have a greater cause for joy. Christ himself gives you joy of it. "Blessed are your eyes for they see!" On a like occasion, "Jesus rejoiced, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." You have greater cause for joy and praise, than if you had got the knowledge of all languages, arts, and sciences; these might make you famous among men, but their advantage would be dropped in the grave. A very learned man once said on his dying bed, "I have spent my life in laborious trifling." He only is truly wise who is "wise to salvation." In this excellent knowledge you are allowed to glory; for "thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, &c." O be thankful to him who hath called you out of darkness into this marvellous light.

But while you are thankful for it, do not be proud of it. The wisest know but little of what is to be known. "Follow on to know the Lord." "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ." Read the word, and meditate in it day and night. Pray over it, and pray for the Spirit to lead you into all truth. And while you praise him with your lips, remember also to praise him with you lives. Let it not be said, "What do you more than others?" But prove the superior excellency of your knowledge, by the superior excellency of your conduct; "for, ye

were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord ; *walk as children of light*, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." Believers are appointed to be lights in the world ; and much of their duty is comprehended in one word—SHINE ! "*Let your light*, says our Saviour, *shine*, and shine *before men* too ; that is not forbidden ; yea, it is commanded. But it is thus commanded, *Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your GOOD WORKS—*Yourselves, as little as may be—your WORKS more than yourselves, (as the sun giving us light, will scarcely suffer us to look upon itself)—*may glorify—*Whom ? You ? No, but *your Father, who is in heaven*. Let your light shine ; it is given for that purpose ; but let it always shine to the glory of *the Father of lights*." Thus may you be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding ; being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, until you see him, no more "through a glass darkly, but face to face ;" until you know, even as also you are known.

Now unto God, the Father of lights—to Jesus Christ the sun of righteousness, and the Holy Spirit of truth, be all glory, by every enlightened mind in heaven and earth, for ever and ever. Amen.

## SERMON XLI.

### THE HEART TAKEN.

Luke. xi. 21, 22 ..... *When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace : But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.*

THE miracles which our Lord performed were so obvious, that it was impossible for his greatest enemies to deny them ; but such was the malice of their hearts, that they said he performed them by the power of the devil. Our Saviour, in answer to this, shows how unreasonable and absurd it is, to suppose that Satan should cast out himself, or any way oppose his own kingdom ; "for every

kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against itself falleth." But in the text he shows how he had performed the miracle of casting out Satan, namely, by his superior power. He compares Satan to a strong man, armed with weapons to defend his house; and he compares himself to one that is stronger than the strong man. He allows that the devil is strong, but asserts that he is much stronger, and therefore able to cast him out. By this similitude our Lord vindicates his miracles, and proves he did not act in concert with Satan. But the words are also fairly applicable to Christ's continual victories over the devil in the hearts of men, by that power which still goes along with the preaching of the Gospel. They describe two things:

I. The sad condition of an unconverted sinner : and

II. The wonderful power of divine grace in his conversion.

1. Here is the sad condition of an unconverted sinner ; his heart is the habitation of Satan ; the faculties of his mind, and the members of his body, are Satan's *goods* ; they are employed by him in the service of sin ; and while this is the case, there is peace—a false and dangerous security ; until Christ, by his Gospel, disturbs it, and by his grace, delivers the prey from the hands of the mighty.

(1.) The human heart is a *palace*, a noble building ; at first erected for the habitation of the great and glorious God, who made man "in his own image, after his own likeness," "in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness." But the holy God has withdrawn himself, and left this temple desolate. The stately ruins are visible to every eye, and bear in their front this doleful inscription—  
 "HERE GOD ONCE DWELT. The comely order of this house is turned into confusion ; the beauties of holiness into noisome impurities ; the house of prayer into a den of thieves ; the noble powers of the soul, designed for divine contemplation and delight, are alienated to the service of base idols and despicable lusts. The whole soul is like the ruined palace of some great prince, in which you see, here the fragments of a lofty pillar, there the shattered remains of a curious statue, and all lying neglected and useless among heaps of dirt. The faded



“glory, the darkness, the impurity of this palace plainly shew *the great inhabitant is gone!*” But,

(2.) The heart is now become the palace of Satan. Great is the power of the devil in this world, and over the minds of wicked men. This is an unwelcome truth; but it must be told. Our Saviour calls him, (John xiv. 30) *the Prince of this world*—He who rules in this kingdom of darkness, and who is also called, (2 Cor. iv. 4,) *the god of this world*, because of the great interest he has in the world, and the homage that is paid to him by the multitudes in the world, and the great sway that, by divine permission, he beareth in the hearts of his subjects. The worship of the heathens is the worship of the devil. Those who worship Jupiter, Bacchus, Venus, or any other idol, do really worship the devil; and the foolish, filthy, and bloody rites and ceremonies of their worship are very fit for such devilish gods. But it is not among pagans only that he reigns. St. Paul assures us, Eph. ii. 2. that unconverted men “walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air—*the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*”—those who are disobedient to God, are obedient to Satan: he works powerfully in them; they follow his suggestions; they comply with his temptations; they are subject to his commandments; and are “led captive by him at his will.” This is a very awful state! People may be in it without knowing it. But all are in it *by nature*: all are yet in it, who “walk after the flesh, fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind.”

The dwelling of Satan in a sinner is further insisted on in this chapter, verse 24, &c. “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest: and finding none, he saith, *I will return to my house.*”—There may be a partial and temporary reformation in a sinner; but without a real change, the devil will resume his power, “and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

The heart of man is either God’s house, or Satan’s. If God do not rule there by his Spirit, Satan does; and it may easily be known who rules. St. John plainly decides this matter, 1 John iii. 7. “Little children, let no man

deceive you: he that doth righteousness, is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." Our Lord spake the same language to the wicked Jews. They boasted that they were Abraham's children, and the people of God; but he faithfully told them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." "Know ye not," saith the apostle Paul, Rom. vi. 16. "that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, *his* servants ye are, to whom ye obey; whether of *sin* unto death, or of *obedience* unto righteousness?" Sin is the devil's work, and death is the wages of sin. One person is under the power of drunkenness, another of uncleanness; another curses and swears, another lies, another steals. All these are Satan's drudges and slaves. Their slavery is the most abject in the world, and is worse than any other, for in other cases the poor slave longs for freedom, and gladly escapes if he can; but here the wretched sinner hugs his yoke, fancies music in his chains, and scorns the proposal of liberty. All this is owing to the power and craft of the devil, who

(3.) Endeavours by all means to keep possession—"the strong man armed, *keepeth* the house;" and this he does by hiding from his vassals the fatal consequences of sin—by hindering any intercourse with the right owner—and by filling the heart with prejudice against him.

He keeps possession of the sinner's heart by hiding from him the evil and wages of sin. He is called *a ruler of darkness*, he reigns *in* darkness, and *by* darkness. Sinners little think where he is leading them. "Surely, in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." (Prov. i. 17.) The silly birds are wiser than sinners. Sinners are told of their danger, but to no purpose. Satan hath shut their eyes, and they are determined to keep them shut; "they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil:" and how justly may a holy God doom that soul to everlasting darkness, who wilfully rejected the light of life.

Satan does all he can to prevent any intercourse between the sinner and the blessed God, who is the original and

rightful owner of the heart. Such is the love of God to his rebellious creatures, that he has sent his Son into the world to make reconciliation ; and he has also sent his servants to publish the Gospel, or the ministry of reconciliation, “ beseeching sinners, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled to God.” But Satan dreads the effects of the Gospel, and therefore tries to hinder it. St. Paul says, “ Satan hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, lest the light of the glorious Gospel should shine into them.” He would keep the light of the Gospel out of the world if he could ; and he tries hard for it in some places, by his persecuting agents ; but as he cannot do this, he will keep it out of men’s hearts if possible. He loves to keep men in ignorance and error. He persuades some to break the sabbath, and to forsake the house of God, and to neglect the bible ; and he keeps others in a state of wretched formality ; they worship God with their bodies, but their hearts are far from him.

He fills the hearts of many with prejudices against Christ and the Gospel. Those who preach it and receive it, generally go under some name of reproach, and are so misrepresented by ignorant, interested, and carnal persons, that they are afraid to hear and judge for themselves. Where open persecution is not permitted, this is one of Satan’s principal means of keeping the possession of the sinner’s heart. But this snare would be broken, if men would remember that it has always been the lot of good men to be despised—that Christ himself was treated in the same manner—that he tells all his followers to expect reproach ; and calls upon them to rejoice and be exceedingly glad on that account. Thus you see that,

(4.) Satan is but too well qualified to maintain his ground—he is compared to a *strong man*—and to a strong man *armed*. Devils are fallen angels, strong in their natural powers ; vastly superior to men ; and they have been long practised in the arts of destruction ; they are like enemies flushed with victory, having succeeded in millions of instances, and were therefore not afraid to attack the innocent Jesus himself. Satan is *armed*; armed with astonishing cunning ; he is “ the old serpent, that deceived the whole world ;” armed with inveterate malice against

God and against man : as a hungry and ravenous lion, he goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

We read in 2 Cor. x. 4. of Satan's *strong holds*—fortified places. Ignorance, prejudice, beloved lusts, evil habits, the way of the world, &c. are Satan's strong holds in the hearts of some ; vain imaginations, carnal reasonings, and proud conceits of self-righteousness exalt themselves in others against the knowledge of God ; and by these means the devil keeps men from faith in Christ, and retains the possession of their hearts as his own property.

(5.) While the strong man, thus armed, keepeth his palace, *his goods are in peace*. There is, indeed, “no (true) peace to the wicked :” God hath not spoken peace ; but sinners speak peace to themselves, and Satan, by wicked and carnal ministers, who are some of his best agents, speaks peace also. Carnal persons have generally a good opinion of themselves, and of their state ; they think they have good hearts, are not so bad as others, and have no occasion to be uneasy. Just like St. Paul before his conversion—*I was alive*, saith he, *without the law, once*. He thought if any man would go to heaven, he should. He trusted in his birth, and education ; his good church, and his good life : Satan, the strong man armed, had then full possession of his heart, and therefore, all was quiet ; “but when the *commandment* came ;”—when the holy, fiery, spiritual law, Christ's pioneer, came and shewed him he was a sinner, a great sinner, the chief of sinners ; then farewell this old peace, this false peace, this fatal peace ; then he saw *what* he was, and *where* he was ; and was glad to get peace from another quarter, even from the blood of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

If a person is never uneasy about his sins, it is no good sign. It may be feared that Satan keeps his heart ; for wherever the Gospel comes, though it be the Gospel of peace, it creates disturbance. It often occasions great agitation in a parish, in a family, and in the heart ; and be not offended, brethren, if it do so among you. Jesus Christ has told us it will do so. Luke xii. 51. “Suppose ye that I am come to give *peace* on earth ? I tell you, Nay ; but rather *division*”—“a *sword*”—“*fire*.” Ver. 49. The Gospel certainly tends to promote peace with God and



man; but through the carnal enmity of the natural man, it becomes an occasion of great discord. Wherever the Gospel was first preached by the apostles, it excited disturbance and persecution; and, to this day, where the true Gospel is newly preached, it makes "no small stir," and people are ready to say, as of old, "The men who have turned the world upside down are come hither also." Satan will not quietly part with his prey; and ungodly men, who know not the nature and need of the Gospel, will oppose it.

The Gospel is designed to bring the heart to rest and peace in Jesus; but, as the soul must change masters, this revolution cannot be brought about without division. There must be a separation of the heart from the creature, in order to its union with God; for peace with the world, and peace with him, are inconsistent.

Having thus shown you the first thing in the text, namely, The sad condition of an unconverted sinner, let us proceed to display,

II. The wonderful power of divine grace in his conversion—*when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.*

Observe here, the greatness of the Conqueror, Jesus Christ; he alone is stronger than Satan. Strong as the devil is, he is but a creature, and his power is finite: Jesus Christ is the Creator, and his power is infinite. He made the worlds. This earthly ball, the glittering stars, the silver moon, and the glorious sun, are all the work of his hands; and by his power all nature stands; "in him all things consist;" "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, and to him be glory for ever, Amen." This glorious and gracious God "was manifested in the flesh," he took our feeble nature, and became a man, that he might "destroy the works of the devil," and rescue his people from Satan's destructive hands.

See him in the wilderness encountering this hellish foe; he was tempted in all points like ourselves; but he vanquished the enemy, and he fled from him. See him displaying his superior power in casting out devils from the bodies of many miserable people. They could never re-

sist his command. By a single word he relieved multitudes who had long been oppressed by Satan, and whose bodies as well as souls, had been his habitation. He gave a portion of the same power to his disciples, who, returning from their mission, joyfully cried, "Even the devils are subject unto us through thy name!" "I beheld," said he, "Satan fall as lightning from heaven." Thus was "the prince of this world judged." The conquest was completed when he hung on the cross; and the triumph was celebrated when he rose to the skies—"he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly;" "he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men."

The power of Christ over Satan was displayed in every country where the Gospel was preached. The heathen became ashamed of their idols, and the altars of their gods were deserted. Those oracles, in which, perhaps, Satan had been suffered to speak, were struck dumb; the most abandoned of mankind were reformed and renewed, and the world was astonished at the triumphs of the cross. For it was not by the force of human laws, it was not by the edge of the sword, nor was it by the power of eloquence, that the Gospel prevailed; no, "the weapons of this warfare were not carnal," and however mean they seemed in the eyes of men, they were "mighty, through God, to pull down the strong holds of the devil." Every man who knew its nature, and felt its effects, would say with the apostle, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth;" "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ; by which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."

As the strong man was armed, Jesus Christ is also armed. So speaks the Psalmist, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, meekness, and righteousness; and let thy right hand teach thee terrible things: Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee." Ps. xlv. 3—5 Here Christ is described as a warrior armed for the field. The sword, is

“the word of Christ,” or the Gospel; with this weapon he prevailed, and made his “glory and majesty” known throughout the world, subduing idolatry and iniquity to the faith and temper of the Gospel, and thus rescuing his elect from the power of the devil.

In this conquest, Christ “takes away the armour,” on which so much dependence was placed. By the teaching of the Holy Spirit he takes away the scales of ignorance which covered the eyes; the soul discovers its danger and ruin. He renews the will, for his people are “made willing in the day of his power;” they are glad to quit the service of their old master, and, “willingly yield themselves unto the Lord.” Thus is that prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled, “I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.” Isaiah liii. 12. Having conquered Satan, he takes possession. Much of the glory of Christ consists in vast multitudes of redeemed souls becoming his faithful subjects and humble followers. Subdued by his grace, they give up themselves to him, to be saved, taught, and governed: thus “he sees the travail of his soul,” the fruit of his sufferings: and thus “the pleasure of the Lord prospers in his hands.”

“He divideth the spoil.” As a conqueror takes possession of the enemy’s property, so Christ, having subdued the sinner, now possesses what was before at the disposal of Satan. It is a sad truth, that whatever gifts a natural man has, they are applied to the purposes of sin; his wealth, his wisdom, his time, his influence, and all that he hath. How reasonable is it, then, that the saved sinner, constrained by the mercies of God, should present his body a living sacrifice to the Lord, holy and acceptable; it is, indeed, his reasonable service, and the poet’s sweet language will be cordially adopted:

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small:  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

APPLICATION.——*Whose habitation are we?* Christ’s or the devil’s? One or the other rules in our hearts. Every man is under the influence of the good Spirit of God, or

the evil spirit of the devil. "Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" said the apostle to the first christians. So we may say to wicked men, Know ye not that ye are the temples of Satan, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience? Does *sin* or *Christ* reign in you? What is your leisure time devoted to? What are your affections set upon? Is it upon vanity, pleasure, the lusts of the flesh? while Christ and his great salvation are neglected, the soul forgotten, sin indulged, prayer omitted, religion despised? O Sirs! your case is dreadful. You may, perhaps, laugh at all this; you may even say there is no such a being as the devil; that the scriptures speak in a figurative way, and use strong eastern figures: But you may as well deny that you have a rational spirit within you, as deny the existence of good and evil spirits without you. Our Lord teaches us daily to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;" or, as it might be rendered—*the evil one*. O that you might put up that prayer from your heart! O that you had a wish to be delivered from his power! for if you should live and die under it, you must hear that awful sentence from the mouth of Christ, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for *the devil and his angels*." Horrible company! frightful association! Yet, how just! Sinners hearkened to his temptations, and they must partake in his torments. His works they would do, his wages they must receive. In this life they joined with devils against God and holiness: in the other, they must be shut up with them for ever. O that men would consider this in time; renounce the devil and his works, and open the door of their hearts to the Lord! Why should men choose that company in this world, which they would abhor in the next? Those who hate the company of the religious now, will not be troubled with it hereafter; but as ungodly company is their delight now, they will have a miserable eternity to pass with it: and let those who foolishly invoke the devil to take them, soberly consider, that the company so often invited will be terrible when it comes.

But, O believer in Jesus, hail! thou art happily delivered. Adore and love the great Deliverer. Had not he interposed, had he not conquered Satan for thee on the cross.



and led thee by his Spirit, thou hadst still been his wretched vassal. When Jesus had cast the devil out of a man, who had been miserably treated by him, he was so transported with love and gratitude, that he besought him, "that he might be with him:" Luke viii. 38; he longed to enjoy his company, as Mary Magdalene and others whom he had healed did; but our Lord saw fit to deny him this request; and ordered him "to return to his own house, and show what great things God had done for him." Go, Christian, and do likewise. Like him, "publish throughout the whole city, how great things Jesus has done for thee."

The castle of the human heart,  
Strong in its native sin,  
Is guarded well in every part,  
By him who dwells within.  
Thus Satan for a season reigns,  
And keeps his goods in peace;  
The soul is pleas'd to wear his chains,  
Nor wishes a release,  
But Jesus, stronger far than he,  
In his appointed hour—  
Appears, to set his people free  
From the usurper's power.  
The rebel soul that once withstood  
The Saviour's kindest call,  
Rejoices now, by grace subdu'd,  
To serve Him with her all.

OLNEY HYMNS.

## SERMON XLII.

CHRIST IS ALL.

Colossians iii. 2. *But Christ is all.*

THE necessity of having *some* religion is generally admitted, even by the most ignorant and profane. All agree that we ought to be religious; but what true religion consists in, is very much disputed. Every man forms a system for himself, and then flatters himself it must be right. But as there are various schemes, which contradict each other, we are sure that they cannot all be

right. How then shall we judge whether they are right or wrong? I answer the Gospel is our only rule. Bring every thing called religion to this touchstone. Bring it to this text, *Christ is all*; that is, in true Christian religion, Christ is all; he is the sum and substance of it; the beginning and the end of it.

St. Paul is here speaking of a conduct agreeable to the Christian profession; he is recommending to the Colossians the mortification of all corrupt affections; to "put off the old man of sin," and to "put on the new man of grace;" for a true Christian is "a new creature;" and in this state of renovation, or under the present Gospel dispensation, he says, "there is neither Greek nor Jew; circumcision, nor uncircumcision, barbarian, scythian, bond nor free: but *Christ is all, and in all*:" that is, under the Gospel, God has no partial respect to persons, on account of their country, their religious forms, customs, or situations in life: Christ has taken away all partition walls, and men of all sorts stand on the same level before God, both as to duty and privilege; and for this reason, Christ is the *all* of a Christian, let him be who he may, Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, master or servant; his whole salvation, hope, and happiness, from first to last. The words then teach us the grand truth, that,

*In the religion of the Gospel, Christ is all.*

This is the general language of Scripture. Whatever we want in religion, we must have it from Jesus. So St. Paul speaks, 1 Cor. i. 30. "Christ is made unto us, *wisdom; righteousness; sanctification, and redemption*." We are ignorant and foolish in the things of God; Christ, by his word and Spirit is made *wisdom* to us. We are guilty sinners, liable to God's wrath; he is made *righteousness* to us, he is our great atonement and sacrifice. We are depraved and corrupt, he is made *sanctification* to us; he is the source of all grace, and out "of his fulness we receive grace for grace." We must die and see corruption; but if united to him, he shall raise us up again, and deliver us from the power of the grave, and so be made *redemption* to us. Thus is he our *all*, that "no flesh should glory in his presence," but that, as "*Christ is all*," Christ may have all the glory.

Whatever we want in religion we have in Christ. To

be *accepted* of God; to be *sanctified* in heart and life; and to be made *happy* here and hereafter, are the great things we seek in religion. In Jesus we have them all.

1. Jesus Christ is all in our *justification*.

We are sinners. We have broken the holy law of God, and by so doing we have exposed ourselves to the dreadful curse of the law, and to the terrible wrath of an offended God. However easy and secure ignorant sinners may be, it is a certain truth that sin renders us liable to wrath. Fornication and uncleanness; drunkenness and covetousness, shut men out of the kingdom of God. "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." *Ephes. v. 3, 6.* And O, who can tell the power of his anger! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Now when the blessed God intends mercy for a sinner, he opens his eyes to behold his true condition. He perceives that he has to do with a most holy God, who hates sin, and will certainly punish it. He sees plainly that he is a sinner, a great sinner, a rebel against God. He is alarmed, and justly too. His fears are well grounded; and in the manner of persons terrified at the approach of danger, he cries out, What shall I do to be saved? Is salvation possible? How may I get it? I would fly from the wrath to come, but, Whither must I fly?

To a person in this state the Gospel is welcome indeed! It affords glad tidings of great joy. It sets before the distressed sinner, just exactly what he wants: A SAVIOUR, mighty and ready to save; to "save to the uttermost," all who come unto God by him.

Some, indeed, who are under concern of soul, do not at first see that Christ must be all, in their coming to God. Sensible of sin and afraid of hell "they go about for a time, to establish their own righteousness." "I have been a wicked sinner, saith one, but I will reform my life, and if I do my best, will not that suffice? I will be sorry for what is past, and amend in future. I will be religious, devout, and charitable; will not God then accept me?"

I answer by another question, Is this making Christ *all*? No; it is making him *nothing*. Christ alone is a

sinner's righteousness. See what the Scriptures say on this head.

Is the wrath of God due to sin? *Christ hath delivered us from the wrath to come.* 1 Thess. i. 10. Does the holy law denounce a curse against every transgressor? *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* Gal. iii. 13. Can there be no remission of sin without shedding of blood? *Christ hath shed his blood for the remission of sins.* Matt. xxvi. 28. Does the law require of us a perfect righteousness? *Christ was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* 2 Cor. v. 21. Are we far from God? *He died, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God.* 1 Pet. iii. 18. Are we, as sinners, abominable to God, and justly rejected? *If believers in Christ, we are accepted in the Beloved.* Eph. i. 6. Are we every way imperfect in ourselves? *We are complete in him.* Col. ii. 10. Are we pursued by the law? *We have fled for refuge to lay hold on (Christ) the hope set before us in the Gospel.* Heb. vi. 16. Are we filthy by reason of sin? *The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* 1 John i. 7.

These Scriptures, and many more which might be quoted, show that, in the grand affair of a sinner's justification, or acceptance with God, *Christ is all.* Nothing more is needed; and every thing else must be rejected. No works or righteousness of our own have any thing to do in this matter. Good works are the proper fruits of faith, and necessary in their place; but in a sinner's pardon and acceptance with God, let Christ alone be exalted; for *by grace are we saved through faith; not of works lest any man should boast.* Ephes. ii. 8, 9.

2. Jesus Christ is all in our sanctification.

It is admitted, on all hands, that men should be good and holy. Morality, at least, is thought necessary; but the Scriptures go further, and require, not only morality of conduct, but holiness of heart; and declare that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," or go to heaven. But the great matter is, how shall this holiness be got? Many think that the free will and natural powers of man, properly excited by fear of punishment and hope of reward, will produce it. But this is a great mistake. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." In this



business then of sanctification, as well as in that of justification, we shall prove that Christ is all.

“ Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit on the souls of believers, purifying their nature from the pollution of sin ; renewing them in the image of God ; and enabling them, from a principle of grace, to yield obedience to him ; and all this done by virtue of the life and death of Jesus Christ, and the union of believers to him.”

Many devout persons take pains to reform and purify their hearts and lives without sufficiently looking to Christ. They think that they must be justified by the righteousness of Christ, but they must be sanctified by a holiness wrought out by themselves, which, as one says, “ is like squeezing oil out of a flint.” They are not aware that sanctification is by receiving a new nature from above, and by union to Christ himself. Christ dwells in the hearts of believers ; they are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. “ He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” It is therefore by virtue derived from him that we become holy. “ Abide in me, saith Jesus, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye except ye abide in me ; for without me, ye can do nothing.” John xv. 5. Thus “ Christ is made unto us, sanctification.” He procured it for us : it is one of the fruits of his death ; what he designed, in dying for us ; “ he gave himself for us, that he might purify us into himself, a people zealous of good works.” *Titus* ii. 14. It is one of “ the spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in him ;” a special part of his salvation. All the springs of our sanctification are in him ; and they are communicated to us by the constant agency of the Spirit of Christ, who dwells in all believers.

*The example of Christ* is also the grand rule of our sanctification. “ We are predestinated to be conformed to his image,” that “ as he was, so we may be, in this world.” He is proposed to us in the Gospel, in the purity of his nature, in the glory of his graces, and in the usefulness of his conversation, as the holy example which we should constantly imitate. It was one design of his coming into our world, that we might have before our eyes in our own nature, a perfect model of love to God and man ; of holiness, innocence, meekness, patience, devotion and zeal. Nor

is he a christian, except merely in name, who does not daily strive to follow him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Happy would it be for Christians, if they laboured more to be like Christ; and by constantly meditating on the beauty of holiness in him, they would be "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

*The word of Christ* is the great instrument of our sanctification. By the word of Christ we are begotten again, and by the same word we are nourished unto eternal life. When our Saviour prayed for the sanctification of his disciples, he mentioned the means or instrument thereof: "Sanctify them through *thy truth*; thy word is truth." It is the truth of the Gospel, the knowledge of Christ as our Redeemer and Saviour, that the Lord blesses for our purification. We must indeed study the law, as contained in the ten commandments, not in order by our obedience to it to obtain heaven, but to learn its spirituality and purity, to be made sensible of our inability to obey it perfectly, and then to see Christ as the fulfiller of the law, that we may live by faith in his righteousness. Confidence in Jesus, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and hope of glory, will wonderfully contribute to our growth in holiness. And thus it appears that Jesus Christ is all in the matter of our sanctification.

3. Christ is all in respect of *true happiness*, both here and hereafter.

That man is a miserable creature, few will deny; and that sin alone has made him such, none will deny who know the Scriptures. It is, therefore, only the removal of what made him miserable, that can ever make him happy again; and none can do this but Jesus Christ. Sin has blinded the eyes of men in their pursuit of good. They seek the living among the dead; like Satan himself, "they wander about seeking rest and finding none." On the contrary, sin procures misery. The pleasures of sin are momentary, but followed by long and tedious hours of painful reflection and remorse. Envy, and wrath, and anger, and malice, frequently raise a storm in the sinner's bosom; and many a gay worldling feels, at times, a foreboding and dismal prelude of that "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," which will be the sinner's portion in hell.

But, O the matchless mercy of God our Saviour ! “ He remembered as in our low estate.” He looked down from heaven with an eye of compassion. He pitied our miserable condition, and determined upon our relief. “ Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich.”

The religion of the Gospel is calculated to make man happy. “ The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Rom. xiv. 17 : that is, in the righteousness of faith, and true holiness in heart and life ; in solid peace of conscience, through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and a peaceable temper towards others, under a sense of God’s being at peace with us ; and in holy, heavenly joy and consolation, in communion with God, and lively expectation of eternal glory.

Christ is the author of true peace. It does not arise from a Christian’s good opinion of himself and his duties ; not his good heart ; or his good frame ; or his good deeds ; not from any thing done by him, or wrought in him ; but from what Christ has done and suffered ; from the glory of his person, the love of his heart, the perfection of his righteousness, and the fulness of his grace. The believer looks not at, depends not upon, himself, but upon Jesus ; and draws all his safety and happiness from him. “ His conscience says, I will have nothing to do with any thing for salvation, but the righteousness of Jehovah Jesus, and his atonement on the tree. His heart says, This is all my salvation and all my desire. Hope says, I have cast anchor in Jesus, I cannot be dissatisfied. Fear says, I would not for the world offend my God and Father. Thus the whole man bows in subjection to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the miserable sinner becomes a happy believer, and Christ is all in all.”

Abundant is the provision made in the covenant of grace for the present happiness of the Christian in his way to heaven ; and look at this which way you will, Christ is the sum and substance of it. Many are the great and precious promises made to believers, and “ all the promises are in him Yea, and in him Amen.” The Christian’s state is

safe, because Christ is his keeper, his sheep are in his hand, and none shall ever pluck thence.

And as much of the believer's comfort is conveyed to him through the channel of ordinances, let it be observed that in them also, Christ is all in all. Does he *pray*? he cannot live without it; but Christ is the life of his prayers. HE only is the way to the Father; the new and living way into the holiest of all, by which he has access with boldness and confidence, being encouraged to ask what he will, and expect what he asks. Does he offer *praise*? The chief matter of it is, "Blessed be God who hath blessed me with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus." He sees all temporal blessings flowing to him through Jesus, and is thankful for them; but his highest note of praise is: "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!" Does he *read* or *hear the word*? he loves it because it is "the word of Christ," and no preaching has any sweetness in it, if Jesus is forgotten or slighted.

Look at the *sacraments*, and you will find them saying, Christ is all. What is *baptism*, but a declaration of our misery by sin, our need of Christ as a purifier, and a badge of our belonging to him? We are "baptized unto Christ." we are "buried and risen with Christ," we "put on Christ." The *Lord's supper* was instituted to be a memorial of Christ; the bread is the communion of his body, and the cup the communion of his blood. This ordinance shews us that Christ is the food of our souls, sufficient to nourish them unto eternal life; and is intended to stir up and strengthen believers to receive and feed upon him in their hearts, by faith with thanksgiving.

As Christ is the Christian's all, through life, so is he especially his all in a *dying hour*. In that important season, creatures, however useful before, are no longer of any use. What can then support the soul, just entering into eternity, but a precious Christ! It is *his* death that takes away the sting of death. It is the hope of being *with him*, and being *like him*, that reconciles the believer to the great change; together with his faithful promise that "of all the Father hath given him, none shall be lost, and he will raise them up at the last day." Through Christ alone it is that the dying christian may, and often does, triumph, saying, "O



death, where is thy sting ! O grave, where is thy victory !”

We go one step further, and add, that, in heaven itself, Jesus Christ is all in all. It is his glorious presence that brightens and cheers the heavenly world. “ I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ,” said St. Paul. This was what he thought “ far better” than all his spiritual enjoyments and useful employments below. Yea, Christ himself expresses his most affectionate desires for the happiness of his people, by saying, “ Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be *with me*, where I am, that they may behold my glory.” It is an infinite mercy to be *in Christ*, this is our security ; it is an unspeakable favour to have *Christ with us*, this is our chief happiness on earth : but the blessing that completes and crowns the whole is, to be *with Christ*, for ever and ever. There all the millions of the redeemed shall be of one heart and of one mind, and with one voice concur to sing that Jesus Christ is all in all.

APPLICATION.—1. From what has been said it appears how erroneous, unscriptural, defective and destructive, every system of religion must be, wherein Christ is not all. Look around you ; such systems will readily be found, in which Christ is not all ; in which he is little or nothing. The mere moral scheme, or the notion of men’s being saved by their good works, deprives him of all his glory, and renders the expense of his precious blood a needless waste ; “ for if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain.” Gal. ii. 21. Beware of every doctrine that would lessen the honour of Jesus, and your regard to him. You cannot raise him too high, or exalt him too much, for he is all in all.

2. Let every one of us then examine his own religion by this rule. What is Christ to *me* ? Do *I* prize and esteem him above all, as “ the chief of ten thousands and altogether lovely ?” In the all-important concern of approaching to God, and seeking *acceptance* with him, what do *I*, a guilty, filthy, helpless sinner look to and rest upon ? Is it Jesus alone ! Is he *my* all in coming to God ? In the grand affair of *sanctification*—the love of God and the love man ; do *I* consider this as a part of the salvation that is in Christ, as prepared for me, and laid up in Jesus to

he received daily out of his fulness by faith? And as to *my happiness* in this world of misery, do I draw it out of the broken cisterns of perishing creatures, or from the unfailing and boundless ocean of divine love? Do I daily endeavour to walk with God as *my God*, reconciled to *me*, in Jesus; trusting in him for all needful blessings, to keep me safe, and render me happy: seeing all my affairs in his hands, working together for my good, and leading me forward, step by step, to his blessed presence, where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore? Happy, thrice "happy is the man that is in such a case; yea, happy is that man whose God is the Lord?" Ps. cxliv. 15.

How rich is the believer! He who has Christ, has *all*, for Christ is all. *All are your's*, says the apostle, *whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's.* 1 Cor. iii. 22. The various gifts of Christian ministers are your's; the government of the *world* is upon the shoulders of Christ, who is "Head over all things to the church:" your *lives* are given you for a blessing whether they be long or short, prosperous or adverse; *death* itself, the king of terrors, is disarmed of its sting; and in whatever form it comes, it comes to be your eternal gain: All *present* things, spiritual or temporal, comfortable or afflictive, work together for your good; every occurrence yet before us in this world, is wisely adjusted by infinite love: and, to crown all in the future world, there is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for you, and ready to be revealed."

On the other hand, how poor, how miserably poor, is the carnal worldling, the careless sinner, the man who lives "without Christ in the world?" He has nothing, let him possess what he may. Could he call both the Indies his own, he is "poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked:" even now he feels an aching void, and death will soon convince him that all is vanity and vexation of spirit. O that you may be wise in time. Behold this glorious Saviour stands at the door of your hearts and sues for admission. O consider the matter well before it be too late. "Have you sins, or have you none? If you have, whither should you go, but to the Lamb of God, which

taketh away the sins of the world? Have you souls, or have you none? If you have, whither should you go but to the Saviour of souls? Is there a life to come, or is there not? If there is, whither should you go but to him, who only hath the words of eternal life? Is there a wrath to come, or is there not? If there is, whither should you go, but to him, who only can deliver from the wrath to come? And will he not receive you? If he yielded himself into the hands of them that sought his life, will he hide himself from the hearts of them that seek his mercy? If he was willing to be taken by the hand of violence, is he not much more willing to be taken by the hand of faith? O come, come, come! I charge you come. I beseech you come. Come, and he will give you life. Come, and he will give you rest. Come, and he will receive you. Come as thou art, come poor, come needy, come empty," Christ is all, and has all, and will give thee all, to make thee happy now and for ever.

To him, who is all, be all glory, now and ever. Amen.

## SERMON XLIII.

APOSTACY FROM CHRIST TO BE DREADED.

John vi. 67, 68.....*Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.*

THESE words were occasioned by a remarkable falling off among the followers of our Lord. Vast numbers of people attended his ministry, and no wonder. The sanctity of his character, the benevolence of his heart, the amazing miracles that he wrought, and especially his sweet, heavenly, powerful manner of preaching, could not but excite great multitudes to follow him. Thousands and thousands listened to him with pleasure; and yet, the number of his genuine disciples was very small.

Having performed an amazing miracle, in feeding five thousand people with five loaves, the people were satisfied that he was the Messiah, and determined to make him a

king. Our Lord withdrew, and crossed the sea. The people followed him; when he took occasion to deal very closely with them, and to point out the cause of their not coming to him for life. This gave them great offence; but it proved who were his true disciples, and that the rest were such only in pretence. The whole of his conference with them displays the faithfulness of Christ, and the fickleness of men.

The words of our text are very affecting. Many of his nominal disciples having left him, he puts the question to the twelve apostles, "Will *ye* also go away?" Will you follow their example; or will you abide with me? Peter, in the name of the rest, dreading the thought of apostacy, answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life;" we can never expect so much happiness from another. And he answered well: for those who forsake Christ will never mend themselves, go where they will.

The words may be usefully applied to ourselves. Let us consider Jesus as putting the same question to us: and we may, with Peter's sincerity, make the same reply.

1. Let us consider the question, "Will *ye* also go away?"

This question was put to persons who had professed some regard for Christ. They had seen his miracles with admiration. They had heard his preaching with delight; and they had crossed the lake to meet him again. The same question, therefore, as put to *us*, supposes a professed regard for Christ, as set before us in the Gospel: for if we have not, in some sense, come to him, of course we cannot forsake him. But as the people of old followed him from false motives, and with wrong views, it may be proper for us to consider what it is that makes many among us profess to follow him. And it is plain that the little profession which some make, is the mere effect of custom. They are Christians because their parents were such, and because their neighbours are such. It is the religion of the country: and were these people in Turkey they would be Mahometans. The influence of superiors or friends, sometimes brings them to hear the Gospel, and the love of novelty keeps them under it for a time. Some persons are



much struck with the fervency of a minister of Christ, who speaks in earnest and from the heart ; while the seriousness, the fervour, and the singing of a lively congregation, make an additional impression. Self-interest and worldly advantage make other men professors ; as the people referred to in our text followed Christ for the loaves and fishes. A few others were alarmed by sickness and the fear of death, or affected at some public calamity.

But if a person's religion has no better foundation than these afford, we wonder not at his apostacy. Sooner or later such professors will go back, and follow Christ no more. And the world abounds with temptations, which will be fatal to those who have not " the root of the matter " in them. It may be profitable to point out some of these.

*Persecution* frightens some. Our Lord has bid us expect opposition in following him, for " they who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." We must " take up the cross " if we follow him ; and those who sit not down to count the cost, will be offended when the trial comes. If relations and friends are angry and frown upon them, if superiors and employers withdraw their favours, if their neighbours ridicule and laugh at them, they begin to repent of becoming religious. They regard man more than God, and resolve to be religious only so far as may consist with their worldly ease and advantage. These are the people described by our Lord in the parable of the sower, Matt. xiii. 20. " He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while : for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

*Worldly pleasures, worldly cares, and worldly connexions* make others forsake Christ. The Christian life is a spiritual life. Whoever is led by the Spirit, will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, nor walk according to the flesh. " If we live after the flesh we perish ; but if we, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live." If we are Christians indeed, the world will be crucified to us, and we to the world ; and though we are in it, we shall

not be of it. But if the professor forgets this, and is drawn by degrees into self-indulgence; if he gets a taste for gaiety and public amusements, if he can visit the play-house, and sit down at the card table, he will gradually lose the savour of the Gospel; and, finding a manifest contradiction between the two masters he serves, he will soon quit one of them. He cannot follow Christ and the world too.

*Excessive cares* are almost as dangerous. They distract the mind, and make it unfit for religious duties. They steal away the heart from Christ. Anxiety about the world perplexes the mind: and they who "will be rich," and determine, at all events, to make a fortune, usually make such compliances with that view, as are inconsistent with their profession; they "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." 1 Tim. vi 9. Thus our Lord saith, "He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word and he becometh unfruitful."

*Worldly connexions* ruin others. It is a precept of great importance, but too little regarded: "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." Christians should marry "only in the Lord." How many "have made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience," by neglecting this rule; and by presuming upon their ability both to keep their own ground, and influence their partner also. When Lot was about to leave Sodom, the angels bid him give warning to all his relations of the destruction that was coming; accordingly "he went to his sons-in-law, who married his daughters, and said, Up! get ye out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city; but he seemed to them as one that mocked." Thus the two daughters who had married carnal men perished, while the two who were with him at home, escaped the fire with their father. Gen. xix.

Familiarity with worldly men has a bad influence on the mind. "They that feared the Lord, in old times spake often one to another;" the primitive Christians were much together, "and continued daily in social religion; and

while they did so, they were edified and multiplied. But if professors needlessly associate with wicked and vain persons, they will soon resemble them, learn their manners, and go back from Christ.

*Negligence in religious duties* is another cause of apostacy. The means of grace are of divine appointment; they are wisely calculated to promote the life of God in the soul; and they have the promise of the Lord's blessing to make them effectual. They cannot therefore be slighted without injury. As the body must suffer, if there be not proper attention to wholesome food; so the soul must be injured if ordinances be omitted, or carelessly attended. Declensions in religion usually begin in the closet, then extend to social duties, and at length to the duties of the Sabbath and the house of God. Be not *slothful* then; but "be diligent;" followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

*The falls and divisions of some professors* have a very ill effect upon others. It is common for beginners in religion to entertain too high an opinion of serious characters, and to place too much confidence in them; and if any of these miscarry, they are hurt, and rashly conclude that there is no reality in religion. But they forget that there was a *Judas* among the twelve, and in every age there have been apostates; "nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, the Lord knoweth them that are his." But "woe to the world," and to ignorant professors of this sort, "because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."

This chapter will furnish us with another common cause of apostacy. We shall find that it was *the Doctrine of Christ* which offended those "many disciples who went back, and walked no more with him." Let us see what this offensive doctrine was.

The multitude had followed him because of the miraculous entertainment he gave them. This raised their hopes of his being a temporal king, and of their getting rich in his service. Our Lord, who knew their thoughts, directed them to seek, not the bread which perisheth, but that which endureth to eternal life; not meat for their bodies, but for their souls. He also declared *himself* to be that

meat; that he came down from heaven; that he would give his flesh for the life of the world; and that except a man should eat his flesh and drink his blood, he could have no life in him: but that whoever should partake of him should never die, but have eternal life.

These high and mysterious declarations confounded and offended them. They murmured when he said he came down from heaven, for they knew Joseph his reputed father; and having no spiritual ideas of his discourse, they cried, "How can he give us his flesh to eat?" In short, they thought these "hard sayings," not to be understood or believed.

Our Lord still maintained the doctrine of his descent from heaven, and intimated that, ere long, they would see him ascend thither. He told them that *eating his flesh* was not to be taken in the gross sense of the words, but was to be understood spiritually. He also showed them that their cavils and murmurs arose from the ignorance, corruption, and unbelief of their hearts; and that they needed divine teaching to make them wise to salvation, and that no man could or would come to him, and believe upon him, without superior assistance. "No man can come unto me, except the Father, who sent me, draw him."

These were the sublime and mysterious, but great and glorious truths, which so offended the Jews, and occasioned such a falling off among the disciples.

And is it not just the same to this day? Do we not still find that these doctrines give offence? The claim of Christ to a divine origin is opposed by some. The doctrine of his atonement is rejected by others. And the humbling doctrines of the necessity of divine influences, and of the sovereignty of God in bestowing them where he pleases, are held in abhorrence by many. Talk to men of morality, virtue and good works, and they will hear you: but speak of grace, of the blood of Christ, of faith in his blood, of being taught of God, and drawn by the Spirit, and then they cry Enthusiasm! Methodism! &c. But let us not be offended at this. It should confirm us in the belief of the truth. And while many go back and follow



Christ no more, let us consider him as putting the solemn question to us, "Will ye also away?"

The question is the language of *affection*. It speaks the kindness of his loving heart. Our gracious Lord has a real concern for his servants, for his friends, for his brethren; and he is not willing to part with them. But he would have them serve him freely, and without constraint. He keeps no slaves. This question was put to try them, to give them an occasion of reflecting upon their own happiness, and upon the misery of those who had just forsaken him. And it operated accordingly. It gave occasion for the excellent answer of Peter, which we now proceed to consider.

2. *Then Simon Peter answered him, LORD, to whom shall we go? THOU hast the words of eternal life.*

In this answer, we see the character of the man who made it. Peter was bold and forward, but sincere, affectionate, and candid. He speaks in the name of all his brethren, taking it for granted they were all of the same mind; though, alas! there was a Judas, a devil, among them; one who had "no part nor lot in this matter." Peter answers the question of our Lord by another question, *To whom shall we go?* We seek eternal life, and where can we find it but in thee. It is as if he had said, Whose disciples shall we be, if we cease to be thine? Shall we go to the heathen philosophers for instruction? They are become vain in their imaginations: professing themselves to be wise, they are fools in the matter of eternal life. Shall we go to the Scribes and Pharisees? They are blind leaders of the blind. Shall we go to Moses? He will send us back to thee. Therefore we will stay where we are: we shall never do better.

It is observable that in Peter's answer, *eternal life* appears to be the grand object of the disciples; and the reason why they would not forsake Christ is, because he has the *words* of eternal life. He teaches the true *doctrine* of eternal life, and he is able and willing to *give* us eternal life, as his discourse has largely shewn. Let it then be remembered that

*Serious thoughts of eternity, and sincere desires for eternal life, have a powerful tendency to prevent apostacy.*

*Serious thoughts of eternity!* Alas! how few possess them. In how few do they abide and operate? How few live under the daily impression of the *shortness of time*, and the *length of eternity*! Which is as much as to say, How few are believers! For it is the office of faith to look forward to things "not seen," and to be influenced by them as if they were present. And indeed, this forms the grand distinction between the children of God and the children of this world. He that is of the earth is earthly; he thinks and speaks of earthly things; he that is born of heaven, is heavenly minded. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And it highly concerns each of us to know which of these is our character. It must be one. There is no middle state. And according to our state here, such will be our state hereafter. If eternal life be not our pursuit, it will never be our portion.

Those who are duly affected with eternal things, will certainly be desirous of instruction. They will seriously enquire how eternal life may be obtained. "What shall we do to be saved?" is the substance of their enquiry. Even the people who forsook Christ asked a question of this kind, ver. 28. "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Our Lord gave them this plain answer. "This is the work of God, that ye believe in me." As elsewhere also he declares, "He that believeth on me shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Every thing that relates to eternal life depends on Jesus. *He has the words of eternal life.* He discovered it more fully, and revealed it more plainly than any of the prophets. His Gospel gives us a clear account of the blessed life, and immortal glory of soul and body in the heavenly world. It shews us the true and spiritual nature of that state, and what will be the business and blessedness of glorified saints. It leaves us to no uncertain conjectures, poetical fancies, or sensual notions of paradise; but clearly describes it as a state of knowledge, purity and bliss, in the presence of Immanuel, God with us.

The true and only way to eternal life is revealed by Christ. Many ways have been devised by men. A thousand superstitions have been invented by crafty or deluded

men, and imposed upon the world, as means of obtaining eternal felicity. Every country and every impostor has produced something with this view: and carnal men still ludicrously and profanely talk of every one's setting up his own ladder to heaven. But away with all these. Christ has the words of eternal life. "Whither I go," said he to his disciples, "ye know, and *the way ye know.*" John xiv. 4. Thomas, mistaking his meaning, said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" This mistake gave occasion for a charming declaration on our Lord's part. "Jesus saith unto him—"I am the *WAY*—the *TRUTH*—and the *LIFE*: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." No words before were ever so plain. The substance of this great truth was indeed taught by sacrifices. These preached the necessity of a Mediator, and showed, that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins; but it remained for him who is the *Truth*, the substance of the Old Testament types, himself to say, *I am the Way*. Christ, by his death, opened the gates of heaven. The cross of Christ is the only key that opens the door of glory. "We have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus." This alludes to the High Priest of the Jews, who, once a year, went into the holy of holies with the blood of an animal. The way into this was by the veil which separated it from the holy place. Our way to heaven is through the veil of Christ's body, crucified for us. And it is remarkable that, at the time of his death, the veil of the temple was rent in two, without hands, from the top to the bottom; which signified, that every obstruction to our entrance into heaven was removed by the death of Jesus; so that we may now draw near to God, and enter into glory, in full assurance of faith.

The words of Christ are "the words of eternal life" on another account. They are the *means* and *instrument* of that new and spiritual life in the soul, whereby it is prepared for eternal life. *The words that I speak unto you,* said our Lord, verse 63 of this chapter, *they are spirit and they are life*—they are to be taken, not in a carnal, but in a spiritual sense; and they are the means of conveying the Holy Spirit, whose influence is effectual unto spiritual and

eternal life. It is by the Gospel that "Christ speaketh from heaven;" and when the Gospel is accompanied with the power of the Spirit, "the dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and live." For this purpose it was that the apostles, though forbidden of men, were commanded of Christ to "go, stand and speak in the temple to the people *all the words of this life.*" By the same words the children of God are directed, established, encouraged, and nourished into eternal life.

In the view of advantages like these, well might Peter say, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Eternal life is our aim. Thy words reveal it. Thou shewest us the way to it. Thou art thyself the way. Thy word is the seed of life in our souls. Yea, thou art eternal life. To whom then can we go? We cannot, we dare not, we will not forsake thee.

Such, my brethren, are the sentiments of every gracious soul. With such views as these we shall "cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart," and abhor the thoughts of apostacy from him.

APPLICATION.—Have we *come* to Christ? Are *we*, in any sense his followers? If not, as we have already said, we cannot forsake him: but our case is no less dangerous. Woe be to those who, in a Christian land, a land of bibles and sermons, "refuse to hear him that speaketh from heaven." Woe be to us if he should say to us, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." O, consider of it, thoughtless souls. If you would have eternal life, and surely you wish for it, remember you must have *the words* of eternal life. You must learn the way of life. You must be interested in Jesus who is the life. The Lord incline you, while it is called to-day, to hear his voice and live.

What we have heard of the words of life should endear them to us. The doctrines of grace are not idle speculations, or needless disputings about words and names; they are not a vain thing; they are words of life. O then "let the word of Christ dwell in us richly," let us lay it up in our hearts, and prize it above our chief treasure.

And now, let us consider Christ himself as putting this question to each one of us—*Wilt thou go away?* Others do.



We live in a day when great numbers do. Like the apostate Jews referred to in our text, their carnal minds, filled with reasoning pride, reject the Gospel, revile the Scriptures, deny Christ, and renounce the very name of Christian. The Lord pity them, and bring them back again to his fold ! But wilt *thou* also go away ? O consider well before you go. *To whom* will you go ? Will you go to the modern philosophers ? Not for eternal life surely ! They say there is no such thing ; and if you do want eternal life, where will you find it but in Jesus ? Will you go back into the world ? Alas, it is vain, and will deceive you. Will you return to sin and folly ? It will insure your eternal death. Resolve then with Peter to cleave to Christ.

But pray for preserving grace. Be sensible of your own weakness, and pray “ Lord leave me not to my own will. To be willing to go away and leave thee, is to be willing to perish ; and I shall infallibly be willing to do it, if thou leavest my will to itself.” You must watch and pray continually. Resist the first motions to coldness, negligence, and apostacy. Guard against the seductions of the world, and the bewitching pleasures of sin. And may God fulfil his gracious promise—“ I will put my fear in their heart, that they shall not depart from me.”

“ Lord ! thou alone hast pow’r, I know,  
To save a wretch like me ;  
To whom, or whither could I go,  
If I should turn from thee ?”

“ No voice but thine can give me rest,  
And bid my fears depart ;  
No love but thine can make me bless’d,  
And satisfy my heart.”

“ What anguish has that question stirr’d,  
If I will also go ?  
Yet, Lord, relying on thy word,  
I humbly answer, No ?”

NEWTON.

## SERMON XLIV.

## THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

LUKE ii. 15.....*Let us now go, even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass.*

THE wise man observes, that "the eye is not satisfied with seeing." The truth of this observation is confirmed by the experience of all ages ; only it admits of one exception—There is *one* object, and only one, which can satisfy the eye of the mind, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a proof of this in good old Simeon, mentioned in the 29th and 30th verses of this chapter. He had long waited for Christ, "the consolation of Israel," and he lived to see the infant Saviour brought into the temple ; when, clasping the holy child in his feeble arms, "he blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Some of the Turks, it is said, put out their eyes, as soon as they have seen Mahomet's tomb, because they would not defile them again by regarding any common object. Does superstition teach them so to admire the grave of a wicked impostor?—O let us, as Christians, hasten to behold a sight of real glory ; let us "turn away our eyes from beholding vanities ;" let us fix them upon the adorable Jesus ; let us say, with the admiring shepherds in our text, when just informed of the Saviour's birth, "Let us now go, even to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass."

It was to *shepherds* ; poor, honest, industrious men, that the good news was first announced :—an encouraging circumstance for the poor of this world ; and an encouragement for such to be "diligent in business," for, it was when the shepherds were watching their flocks by night, that these glad tidings were brought them. An angel delivered the message ; and a multitude of angels joined in chorus—*Glory to God in the highest—and on earth peace—good-will towards men.* Here humility and glory were joined in their extremes. He empties himself of his hea-

venly glory; he takes upon him human nature; his mother is a poor woman; a common inn is the place of his birth; he is born in a stable; he is laid in a manger. O deep humiliation of the Son of God, the Creator of the world! And yet, behold the glory! A new star directs the wise men of the east to the honoured spot; and a multitude of ministering spirits hymn his birth. Never was the birth of any earthly prince so highly honoured.

God gives us *information*, to put us upon *action*. When the shepherds were informed of what had happened, and where it happened, it put them upon action. Is the Saviour born in the city of David? Let us go then, said they, and see him. The wise men made the same improvement of their information. They saw his star in a distant country, and they followed its direction till they came to Bethlehem.

Let us learn another piece of instruction from them: "Let us go *now*," said they. What, at midnight! Cool Reason would have said, It is an unseasonable hour; and Covetousness would have said, What must become of our flocks? But these plain men, who had left their beds to attend their flocks, now leave their flocks to enquire after their Saviour. Let religion then be our *first* business; it is "the one thing needful:" And what we do in it, let us do it quickly; the sooner the better, without a moment's delay.

We may learn another thing from their example: "Let us go," said they: they excited one another to this good work. Let the advantages of society be brought into religion. How many, especially in holiday seasons, will say to one another, "Let us go to such an amusement, such a public house, such a party of pleasure;" let us rather say, "Let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he will teach us of his ways." "Let us go to Bethlehem, and see Jesus."

The shepherds did as they proposed: "They came with *haste*, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger." They believed, before they came; but now their faith is confirmed by sight. They were gratified and edified by the view; and "they returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had *heard and seen*."

Let us, then, who are here present, imitate these happy and simple hearted men. Let us go to *Bethlehem*: the name signifies *The house of bread*; there, in the contemplation of Jesus, may we find bread for our souls. To excite your serious attention to this divine object, let me inform you what you may expect to see—

DEITY DISPLAYED—

MAN REDEEMED—and

SATAN RUINED.

Let us go to *Bethlehem*, and see *Deity displayed*. The first promise that God made to guilty man was, that “the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.” Jesus Christ, as to the flesh, is the seed of the woman; but he is also infinitely more. St. Paul says, “When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,” Gal. iv. 4. It was necessary to our redemption, that the Saviour of men should be a *man*; for the same nature that sinned must bear the punishment of sin. But, had Christ been produced in the ordinary way of human generation, he must have been a partaker of a sinful nature: this was prevented by the miraculous way of his conception, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus, that *Only-begotten* which was born of the blessed Virgin, was to be called *The Son of God*, “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;” fit to become “sin for us, because he knew no sin.”

In what manner the *human* nature was united to the *divine*, we cannot tell. It is enough for us that it was so united. The testimony of Scripture is most abundant and satisfactory on this head. Let the following texts suffice. *His name shall be called IMMANUEL, which signifies GOD WITH US*, Matt. i. 23. *In the beginning was the WORD; and the WORD was with GOD, and the WORD was GOD: And the WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us*, John i. 1. and 14. St. Paul assures us, 1 Tim. iii. 15, 16, that *this is the pillar and ground of the truth; and, without controversy, the great mystery of godliness—namely, that God was manifest in the flesh.*

O glorious and pleasing truth, God is manifest in the flesh! Surely it is highly desirable for feeble mortals to know their Maker; and, because we could not ascend to him, lo, he descends to us! Deplorable darkness had long



covered the earth, and the wisest of men bowed down “to an unknown God ;” but, glory be to his name, “the only begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him,” John i. 18. This is he who is “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person”—“the image of the invisible God.” Heb. i. 3. This is he, “who, being in the form of God, and who thought it no robbery to be equal with God,” condescends to become a man, a poor man, a servant ; that we, through his poverty, might become eternally rich. By his heavenly doctrine ; by his astonishing miracles ; in his lovely disposition, and especially in his divine person, God was manifested to man. *Show us the Father* (said one of his disciples to him) *and it sufficeth us.* Philip wanted some *visible* representation of God, such as was sometimes granted to the prophets. Jesus, in a way of gentle rebuke, replied—*Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?* and then added these remarkable words, fully proving that God was manifested in the flesh—*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,* John xiv. 8, 9. “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?—henceforth ye have known him and seen him,” ver. 7. 10. “I and my Father are one.” Jesus Christ, then, is God manifested in the flesh. Let us go to Bethlehem, and see this great sight : Angels desire to look at it. Glorious mystery ! We cannot fully comprehend it. “Men may speak and write of it ; but it is not so proper to describe it, as to say that it cannot be described. We may speak of it : but the most we can say about it is, that it is unspeakable : And the most we know is, that it passeth knowledge !” Suffice it, that we believe and adore. Let but “the light shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,” and it is enough : we will dwell at Bethlehem all our days, until he shall remove us to Bethel above, where we hope no longer to see “through a glass darkly, but face to face.”

II. Let us go to Bethlehem and behold *Man redeemed!*

The redemption of fallen, guilty, helpless man, was the grand design of the Saviour’s birth. *God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to REDEEM them that*

were under the law. He was named *JESUS*, because he came to "save his people from their sins." There is something delightful in the name *Saviour*. Cicero, the Roman orator, said, that when travelling in Greece, he saw a pillar inscribed with this word—*SAVIOUR*. He admired the fulness of the name, but he knew not its Christian meaning. How much more may the redeemed sinner admire it?—

" 'Tis music in the sinner's ears,

" 'Tis life, and health, and peace."

It was in this character that the saints of old long expected his appearance. "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him should receive remission of sins." About the time of his coming, the godly people in Jerusalem were "looking for redemption," and, with Simeon, "waiting for the consolation of Israel." Our Lord himself declares this to be the chief design of his coming.—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not *perish*, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. Observe, it was to save sinners from *perishing*; for *perish* we must, without an interest in him. Do we know this? Why do we call him a *Saviour*, if we see not our need of deliverance? and from what?—from *sin* and from *hell*. If we are not saved from sin here, we shall not be saved from hell hereafter.

"God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and (by making him a sacrifice) for sin, condemned sin in the flesh," Rom viii. 3. Mark how the son of God appeared—"in the likeness of sinful flesh;" his nature was perfectly pure; but it had the likeness of our's, which is wholly corrupt. "He knew no sin:" none in nature, none in practice. He had "a clean heart, and pure hands." He could challenge his bitterest enemies to convince him of sin; yea, he defied Satan himself, the great accuser—"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Thus he was a pure and spotless lamb, fit to become a sacrifice for sin. Under the Law, every victim must be perfect, and without blemish. It was necessary the Lamb of God should be so; for "he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin," 1 John iii. 5.

Being thus pure and holy, the sins of the whole Church were laid upon him. "He was made sin *for us*;" "he suffered for our sins;" "the Lord laid upon him our iniquities;" "he bore our sins, in his own body, on the tree." And thus God *condemned sin in the flesh*; he condemned our sin, in the flesh of Christ; he shewed his extreme hatred of it; he passed sentence of death upon it; and executed that sentence in the dreadful death of our Lord. And thus, the condemning of sin in Christ our surety, prevents the condemning of it in our persons. And this is the ground of that excellent privilege mentioned Rom. viii. 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." But this is not all: the end and design of this is, *that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*. Thus the perfect righteousness, demanded by the moral law, is fulfilled *in us*; not in us *personally*, but by our surety in *our nature*, and in *our stead*; and so might be deemed, in legal estimation, to be fulfilled *for*, and *by*, all those of us who truly believe, and who prove the sincerity of our faith by a holy walk.

O the grace and love of the blessed Jesus! He, the most high God, blessed for evermore, consented to become man. He who was *life*, and gave life to all, became a mortal man. He was *born to die*. *Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same*. O love, beyond example or degree!

"O for this love let rocks and hills

"Their lasting silence break;

"And all harmonious human tongues,

"The Saviour's praises speak."

Thus Jesus "delivered us from the wrath to come." Our sin deserved *wrath*, the wrath that is *to come*; for God bears with sinners now, and "endures, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath which are fit for destruction." But God is reconciled to every believer in Jesus. "He was angry, but his anger is turned away." Those who believe "have passed from death unto life:" those who are "redeemed from the curse of the law, receive the adoption of sons." They are also redeemed from the power and dominion of sin; it shall not reign in their mor-

tal bodies. They are redeemed to God: body, soul, spirit, substance, talents, all they have, and all they are, belong to the Lord: and when they have served him and their generation, during his appointed time, he will take them to himself, and they shall know the full meaning of that comprehensive phrase—ETERNAL LIFE. Such are the inestimable blessings which Jesus, the Redeemer of man, came to procure. But let us take another turn to Bethlehem, and see

### III. *Satan ruined.*

It was Satan, the head of fallen spirits, who, assuming the form of a cunning serpent, seduced our first mother in the garden; and, employing her as the tempter of Adam, seduced our first father also. Thus were the flood-gates of sin opened in our world. Thus Satan usurped a sovereign authority over the souls of men; in so much that, in sacred writ, he is distinguished by the names of “the prince of this world;” yea, “the god of this world.” He has set up an opposite throne to that of God; he rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, who are led captive by him at his will. Millions of souls have readily submitted to his chains, and have lived and died in love with their bondage. Cruel tyrant! who shall deliver us from thy destructive power?

It was when our fallen parents stood trembling before their Judge, expecting every moment to taste the threatened death: it was then that a dawn of mercy glimmered in the first Gospel promise, Gen. iii. 14, 15. The LORD, turning to the serpent who seduced them, utters this curse—“Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life; and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” No doubt, the *devil* is here condemned, under the name of the serpent, because he had abused that creature in order to deceive man. He is cursed; for “everlasting fire is prepared for him and his angels.” His power was to be contracted; he was to creep, not fly: his power should be restrained to the *dust*—that is, to *earthly-minded men*, or to the *bodies*, of the



saints. His *head* was to be bruised ; that is, his power was to be finally destroyed by Jesus Christ ; for so St. John expounds it—" The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil." The serpent's poison, craft, and life, are in his head ; if this be bruised he is destroyed. Jesus Christ, in his temptation, baffled the tempter in all his cunning assaults. He cast out devils from the bodies of men : he enabled his disciples to do the same, and empowered them " to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy ;" and he has promised also to his people, that " he will bruise Satan under *their feet* shortly."

God also declared there should be " constant enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman," which includes the *sanctification* of all the elect. Unconverted men are in peace with the devil ; but, when grace comes, war commences, and God will make the believer more than a conqueror.

But all this is in consequence of the birth of Jesus. He is most eminently " the seed of the woman," " the Son of God, made of a woman." By the merit of his death, and by the grace of his Spirit, he destroys the old serpent. Satan was, indeed, allowed, " to bruise his *heel*;" and he did so, by his agents, when he prevailed to procure the crucifixion of our Lord ; but it was then, even then, that " he bruised Satan's *head*," and laid the foundation of his everlasting destruction. Never before did fallen spirits discover so much opposition to Christ. " They were aware, probably of Christ's design to overturn their empire ; therefore they mustered all their forces, employed all their skill ; and, as all was at stake, made one strong effort in a kind of decisive engagement. They armed every proper instrument, and set every engine at work—temptations, persecutions, violence, slander, treachery, and the like. Our Lord, whom they opposed, made no formidable appearance ; he was despised of men, a worm, and no man. But this made the event more glorious. It was a spectacle worth the admiration of the universe, to see the despised Galilean turn all the artillery of hell back upon itself : to see one in the likeness of men, wresting the keys of hell and death out of the hands of the devil ; to see him entan-

gle the powers of darkness in their own net, and making them ruin their own designs with their own stratagems. They made one disciple betray him, and another deny him; they made the Jews accuse him, and the Romans crucify him. But these were the very means of spoiling and triumphing over themselves, Col. ii. 15. The cruelty of devils and their instruments was made subservient to the designs of infinite mercy, and the sins of men over-ruled for "making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness."\*

Thus was "the prince of this world judged." Christ, by his death, "hath destroyed him that had the power of death," and rendered this evident, by the miracles that attended his Gospel, and the power of his grace in the experience of all believers. All the effects of Satan's usurpation shall finally be abolished. Christ shall reign universally through the earth. Satan shall be bound for a thousand years; and, though loosed for a short season, shall be utterly cast out, and confined to hell. The grave shall resign all its dead, and Jehovah Jesus shall reign for ever—"The Lord God omnipotent." Glory, Glory, Glory be to him!

APPLICATION.—Having been to Bethlehem, to see this thing which is come to pass, let us now, like the shepherds, "return, glorifying God for all the things we have heard and seen." We have learned, that in the incarnation of the Son of God we may see *Deity displayed—Man redeemed—and Satan ruined*. How vast and glorious are these designs of a Saviour's birth! The angels knew this when they sang—"Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men." But, are these purposes of his appearance answered as to *us*? Is God, in all his glorious perfections, manifested in the person of Jesus? Well, does this attract *our* notice, and engage our souls to adore, and love and praise him, "magnifying the God of Israel?" "The Lord hath visited and *redeemed* his people." Are *we* among his redeemed? Are we actually redeemed from the guilt and power of our own sins, and from the follies and vanities of this world? The throne of Satan is shaken; but is his power in us abolished? Are

\* See *Maclaurin's* most admirable sermon on glorifying in the Cross of Christ.

we “ delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son?”

This is the way in which we are to consider this grand event ; and, if the ends of Christ’s birth, be answered *in our own experience*, we have abundant cause for joy. But then it will not be the vain, frothy, carnal joy of the world. The manner in which some pretend to celebrate the birth of Christ, at the season called *Christmas*, is a disgrace to a Christian nation. They contradict, as much as possible, the design of his coming. He came “ to destroy the works of the devil ;” they try to keep them up. What have cards, dancing, songs, gluttony and drunkenness, to do with the birth of Jesus ? He came to save his people *from their sins*, not *in them*. O let young people guard against the temptations of such a season ; for there is more sin committed at Christmas in a few days, than in many weeks at other times ; and the sin is the more aggravated, as it passes under the notion of religious joy. But it is an affront to a holy God, a reproach to the Christian name, and ruinous to the souls of men.

Let us rather go to Bethlehem : Let us, like Mary, “ ponder these things in our hearts.” No sooner did the shepherds hear of him, than they ran to enquire after him. Let us also say, “ We would see Jesus.” And where shall we seek him but in his house, in his word ; and if we seek him earnestly, we shall find that the church of God is still a *Bethlehem*, “ a house of bread.” God will feed our souls with “ the bread which came down from heaven, and which endureth to eternal life.”

We may also *see and serve him*, in his poor members. “ The poor we have always with us.” As Christ was found in the stable, so we may find some of his in a cottage, in a garret, forsaken and destitute. Let us go and visit poor families, sick persons, fatherless children, in honour of him who was “ wrapt in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger ;” he will accept the kindness, and say, “ Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me.”

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## SERMON XLV.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST THE CHRISTIAN'S GLORY.

Gal. vi. 14....*God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.*

**T**HE Apostle Paul, whose words these are, had good reason for glorying in the cross of Christ. He tells us, in the text, how useful it was to him. And whoever obtains the true knowledge of "Christ crucified," will, like him "determine to know nothing else," and "esteem all things but loss for the excellency of it." It is well known, that the cross of Christ was "a stumbling block" to the Jews: Nothing offended them so much as the plainness, the poverty, the sufferings and death of Jesus: But St. Paul gloried in the cross; yea, he would glory in nothing else. The Jews gloried in their relation to Abraham, in their temple, in their religious ceremonies; but he, who knew that these were but "shadows of good things to come," gloried in the substance, gloried in the cross of Christ.

"The cross of Christ" signifies, either *our sufferings for him*, or *his sufferings for us*. In the former sense, we are to "take up the cross, and follow him;" but here, we are to understand, *his sufferings for us*; for these are what the Apostle gloried in. "The cross of Christ" sometimes includes the whole Gospel, the doctrine of him who died on the cross, of which, his meritorious death for sinners is the most principal part.

As the cross of Christ is of so much use to a Christian, let us *first*, Take a view of it, or contemplate the sufferings of Christ upon it; and then, *secondly*, Consider its practical uses, or the reasons we have for glorying in it.

I. Let us contemplate the sufferings of our Lord.

But how, or where, shall we begin? Let no one rush into this solemn work in a thoughtless manner. Few persons are properly prepared for it. A mind polluted with sensual pleasures, or a heart crouded with worldly cares, is ill-qualified for the task. When Moses approached the



burning bush, he was commanded to take off his shoes, for the place on which he stood was holy ground. *Gethsemane* and *Calvary* are also holy ground. Let us approach with godly fear, not with vain curiosity; and may the good Spirit of God, the glorifier of Jesus, take these sacred things, respecting his "agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion," and so show them to us, as that we may repent, believe and rejoice!

We ought to remember, that the whole life of Christ was a life of suffering. He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." For our sakes he became poor, and endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. But we must now confine our meditations to his last sufferings, *in the garden; during his trial; and at Golgotha.*

Our blessed Lord having "loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end;" and gave a most affecting proof of it, by washing their feet; celebrating the Passover with them: instituting the sacred Supper; and by his pathetic discourse and affectionate prayers. He then went forth out of the city, accompanied by all the apostles, except Judas, who was preparing to betray him, to a garden, where he used to retire, and had spent many nights in devotion. At the entrance of this, he left eight of the disciples, taking Peter, James and John, to a separate place, where they were spectators of his distress.

Then Jesus "began to be sorrowful, and very heavy"—to be "sore amazed"—the words signify much more than they express, "they imply that he was possessed with fear, horror and amazement; encompassed with grief, and overwhelmed with sorrow; pressed down with consternation and dejection of mind; tormented with anxiety, and inquietude of spirit."

How vast must that pressure have been, which obliged him to complain, and to complain to his inferiors—"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death!" He was in an "AGONY"—a word used no where else in the New Testament; an agony so great and astonishing, that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." In this extreme distress he betook himself to prayer; he first kneeled down, and afterwards fell on his face upon the ground, saying, "O Father, if it be

possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt."

What a mysterious scene is this! What could be the occasion of this agony? It was no human enemy that hurt him; nor was it the fear of his approaching death. Probably it was some peculiar conflict with the powers of darkness, for this was "their hour." Perhaps, the restraint usually laid on these malignant spirits, was now removed; and who can tell what terrors they may inflict, if permitted? Probably, our Lord had now before his eyes, the collected guilt of millions of sinners; and the intolerable misery due to their iniquities: and what an agony must this occasion, when an individual finds one "wounded spirit" more than he can bear?

Here stop, and see "the sinfulness of sin." Perhaps you have seen it only in the garden of pleasure, wearing the mask of happiness: Here, in the garden of sorrow, behold sin stripped of its mask. See, in the agony of Jesus, its true nature and proper effects. "The wages of sin is death;" therefore, the soul of Christ was sorrowful, "even unto death." See here, a specimen of that "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," which every soul of man, not interested in Christ, must suffer, not for a few hours, but to all eternity. And here, believer, see what thou must have suffered, if Jesus had not suffered it for thee. But "it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief," that thou mayest be filled with joy unspeakable. He drank this bitter cup, that he might put into thy hand the sweet cup of salvation.

Our Lord, who knew before hand all things which should befall him, intimated to his disciples, the near approach of the traitor Judas. "Rise," said he, "let us be going; he is at hand that betrayeth me." This infamous man had sold his affectionate master to the priests; and, knowing the place of his retirement, comes attended with an armed force: yet, still pretending friendship, salutes him with a kiss, which was the appointed signal for his apprehension. Jesus offers no resistance, nor attempts an escape. The Lamb of God freely offers himself up, and, with surprising intrepidity and composure, tells them who he is. He could have slain them all in a moment, for he

no sooner uttered the words, *I am He*, than his enemies drew back, and "fell on the ground," as if they had been struck with lightning. He asks nothing for himself, but desires a passport to ensure the safety of those slothful disciples, who had been too careless to watch with him one hour. He rebukes Peter for using his sword, and kindly heals the officer whom he had wounded. "Then all his disciples forsook him and fled."

Now let us follow our Lord from the garden, through the streets of Jerusalem, bound and hurried along, as if he had been a thief, from one part of the city to another; first to the house of Annas, and then to the palace of Caiaphas, where, though it was night, the principal part of the Sanhedrim were met to receive their prisoner.

And here, what horrid injustice reigned. So innocent was he, that his enemies were forced to contrive to forge the shadow of a charge against him. They could scarcely find any villains hardy enough to come forward and accuse him. At length two witnesses arose, pretending that three years before, he had talked about destroying the temple, and rebuilding it in three days. This foolish charge, founded on a gross perversion of his words, was deemed sufficient ground of accusation. And accordingly, early in the morning, he was brought before the great council, and put upon his defence. But he thought proper to decline any vindication of himself, before bloody men, who were determined to murder him. Thus "he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

Being adjured, by the High Priest, to declare whether he was the Messiah, the Son of the blessed God, he affirmed it fully. These wretched hypocrites, taking the advantage of his confession, and pretending great concern for the honour of God, charged him with blasphemy, and immediately adjudged him to death.

But as the power of life and death was, in a great measure, taken from them by the Romans, instead of putting him to death by stoning, they took him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, who, at their request, proceeded to his trial. Here, with malignant cunning they charge him,

not with blasphemy, but with *sedition*, refusing to pay tribute to Cæsar, and calling himself a king, in opposition to the emperor. Our Lord was still silent; at which Pilate was astonished. Pilate having examined him privately, was satisfied of his innocence, and wished to discharge him. But the Jews increased in their vehemence against him, insisting upon it that he should be put to death. To which, at length, Pilate, an unjust, time-serving man, reluctantly consented.

Shocking were the insults which he endured at various times and places, from the officers of the priests, and from the soldiers. He was mocked, buffeted, spit upon, blindfolded, crowned with thorns, and most severely scourged. But thus was the Scripture fulfilled; for, it is remarkable, that every particular part of his sufferings was predicted long before by the prophets; and thus, under the influence of their own wicked passions, they, unwittingly, accomplished the divine decrees, "for to do whatsoever his hand and his counsel determined before to be done." Acts iv. 27.

And now, they speedily proceed to the execution of the unjust and bloody sentence. And he, bearing his cross, went forth to a place called Golgotha, or the place of a skull, for there the bodies of many criminals were buried. O, how different a procession was this, from one which had passed the streets a few days before. Then, the multitude welcomed him unto the city, shouting Hosanna! now they hasten his death as a malefactor, crying "Away with him, crucify him." So little is popular applause to be regarded. A few, indeed, sympathise with our suffering Lord; but he, affected more with their future woe, than with his own present sufferings, says, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

Fatigued, and ready to faint, with pain, loss of blood, and the weight of the cross, which he carried upon his bleeding shoulders, Cyron, a stranger, is compelled to bear it for him. At length, they arrive at the place. It was "without the city:" in answer to the types of old, which required that the sin-offering should be made without the camp; and, as an example to us, that we should be willing to follow him "without the camp, bearing his reproach."



The cross being laid upon the ground, the sacred body of our Lord, now stripped of all his garments, is laid upon it, stretched as upon a rack, and fastened to it with large spike nails, cruelly driven through his hands and his feet. The cross was then drawn upright, its foot being placed in a hole dug for the purpose. There our Lord hangs, the whole weight of his blessed body bearing upon the wounded parts of it. Not content with the corporal pains he endured, the cruel people endeavour to aggravate them by better taunts and reproaches. They amused themselves with his misery. They ridiculed his pretending to be the Son of God, and the king of Israel; his rebuilding the temple; they bid him "come down from the cross," and then they would believe on him; they tell him "to save himself," if he could save others.—And in all this, the chief priests and scribes, forgetting their dignity, joined the unthinking rabble.

Thus "it behoved Christ to suffer," and thus "the Scriptures were fulfilled." Thus was he "*lifted up*," like his type, the brazen serpent, in the wilderness. He was "cut off, but not for himself," as Daniel predicted. "They pierced his hands and his feet," as said the psalmist.—He was "mocked, scourged, and crucified," as himself had before declared. "They cast lots for his garments," and "he was numbered with the transgressors."

In this painful situation our Lord continued for several hours; for it was a slow, lingering, and extremely painful kind of death. It was also *shameful* in the highest degree; a gallows and a gibbet are not names of greater infamy among us, than that of the *cross* then was. It was also deemed *an accursed death*. By the law of Moses, a person hanged upon a tree, was deemed *accursed of God*. Alluding to this, St. Paul says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Gal. iii. 13.

Our Lord who, when at large, went about doing good, continued to manifest his benevolence, even upon the cross. He prays for his unfeeling murderers; "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." To the penitent thief he said, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He committed the care of his mother to John, his

beloved disciple. All this was done while he suffered the most shocking pains. But the agony of his mind, it should seem, far exceeded them. He was suffering the wrath of God due to sin. The horrible darkness, that for three hours covered the land, was an emblem of the more dreadful darkness and terror of soul, which he endured; and which extorted that mysterious cry—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

But, the painful scene draws to a close. All the prophecies were fulfilled. All the Father gave him to do was accomplished. His sufferings therefore must terminate. Exulting, then, in the completion of his vast and glorious work, he cried, *It is finished*. And then, that, with his dying breath, he might teach us how to die, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" and having said thus, "bowing his head, he gave up the ghost," or "*dismissed his Spirit*."

Thus have we taken a brief view of the cross of Christ. We have seen the blessed Redeemer taken and bound as a thief; hurried from place to place through the night; unjustly condemned both in the ecclesiastical and civil court; treated with all the indignity and insult that hellish malice could devise; buffeted, scourged, and spit upon; and at length put to death on the cross. In all this, the carnal eye beholds nothing but weakness, pain, and ignominy; but the enlightened eye of faith sees a beauty, a grandeur, a glory, far surpassing the brightest objects of sense. So far from blushing at the meanness or shame of the cross, the true believer will cordially unite with St. Paul, and say,—*God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Let us then proceed to consider

## II. The reasons we have for glorying in the cross.

Many reasons may be offered, but we have room to mention only three. By the cross of Christ, The perfections of God are displayed—the believing sinner is fully justified; and provision is made for his sanctification.

We glory in the cross of Christ because God is glorified in it. The *goodness, mercy, and love* of God appear, in all his gifts to men; but most of all in this *unspeakable gift*. Of no other gift is it said—"God so loved the world as to bestow it." "Herein is love;" a love so great that it in-

cludes, and ensures, every other good, "for he that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, will assuredly deny us nothing good." And, O, "the manifold wisdom" that beams from the cross. How deep the contrivance, to make "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other." Never did the spotless *holiness* and the inflexible *justice* of God appear with such awful splendour as at Calvary. Not all the sufferings of the damned can put such honour on the holy law, as it received from the sufferings of Jesus upon the cross: those sufferings "magnified the law and made it honourable." Thus God "declared his justice in the remission of sins," so that "the law as well as the sinner may justly glory in the cross of Christ; for both receive eternal honour from it."

Again, That which endears the cross of Christ to believers is, that from thence they derive free and full justification; they are "justified freely, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." How glorious is that declaration—"The Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all!" That heavy burden, enough to crush a world, was borne by him; and, blessed be God, borne away by him; so borne away, that, if sought for, it shall not be found. We behold then in a crucified Saviour, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The real Christian will glory in nothing else. He places no dependence on his prayers, his repentance, his duties, his charity, his sufferings; all these are for ever discarded, in respect of justification by them. To trust upon these, in whole or in part, would be the greatest dishonour to Christ, and render his cross a needless useless thing. This he abhors from his heart, as the vilest blasphemy and sacrilege; and therefore sincerely says with the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

But there is another reason for glorying in the cross, namely, it is the cause and the instrument of our *sanctification*;—hereby the world is crucified unto us, and we are crucified to the world. Nothing but a spiritual sight of the glory of the cross, and a good hope of personal interest in its blessings, will ever effectually wean our

hearts from the world. To be dead to the world, is of the utmost importance in the matter of our sanctification; for the love of the world is the principal source of our sins. We shall never cease to make the world our portion, till we get something better in its stead. It is by the doctrine of Christ we learn its vanity. It is by the example of Christ we learn to despise it. His whole humiliation from the manger to the cross, poured contempt on human greatness, and has sanctified to his followers a life of labour, poverty, and reproach. A true follower of Christ will be ashamed to glory in those worldly objects which his Saviour trampled beneath his feet, while it will sweetly reconcile him to a humble lot, that his master endured the same; and thus will he learn "to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus."

APPLICATION.—*When the people who came together to see the doleful spectacle of the crucifixion, beheld the things that were done, they smote their breasts and returned.* And surely, when we return from this view of the cross, and consider what we have seen and heard, we have reason to smite our breasts, and be deeply affected with our sins and his sufferings. Nature itself, seemed to sympathise with our suffering Lord. The sun was darkened. The earth quaked. The rocks were torn asunder. The veil of the temple was rent. The graves were opened; and the heathen guards were constrained to say, "Truly this was the Son of God!" And now, how are *our* hearts affected? Is all this "nothing to us?" Can we behold this awful scene with cold indifference? If we can, it may be feared our hearts are harder than the rocks, and that we have no part or lot in the matter. Surely this awful spectacle will command our attention, and excite our serious thoughts. Come, you who have loved and lived in sin, who have rolled it as a sweet morsel under your tongues, who have laughed at, and often said, what harm is there in it? Come, and see the Saviour in his agony, sweating blood: see him buffeted and despised; see him bleeding, groaning and dying on the cross. And what was all this for? It was for sin. It was to make atonement for sin. He died "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." It was to save such sinners as you from eternal



sufferings. Such was his love. O sinner, let this love constrain thee to forsake thy sins, and come to him that thou mayest have life.

*When I am lifted up*, said Jesus, before his crucifixion, *I will draw all men to me*. O what blessed attraction is there in the cross of Christ! Here is salvation. A salvation complete and free: just such as a guilty helpless sinner needs. When Christ crucified was first preached by Peter, three thousand souls, and among them perhaps many of his murderers, were drawn to him in one day. To-day, by this sermon, he is lifted up; "crucified before your eyes." O for the power of the Holy Spirit, to draw your hearts to him! Come, and he will receive you.—Come, and he will pardon you. Come, and he will give you rest. His arms, once extended on the cross, are still open to receive the chief of sinners. His blood still cleanseth from all sin;

"Each purple drop proclaims there's room,  
"And bids the poor and needy come."

And now, O that every professed disciple of Christ would consider the *latter* part of the text, and ask himself this question: "Is the world crucified to *me*, and *I* to the world?" Does the cross of my Saviour throw a salutary shade over the gaudy glories of the world. Is it crucified? Is it a dead, or at least, a dying thing, in my esteem; and am I, because of my attachment to the truth, cause, and people of Christ, become like a dead man in the world's esteem? Such, brethren, in some happy degree, is the true influence of the cross of Christ. Such is the holy, practical tendency of Gospel truth; and whoever finds this in himself, has abundant cause to glory in the cross of Christ.

May divine grace teach us, more and more, to esteem the cross of Christ, and to glory in nothing but our knowledge of it, interest in it, expectations from it, and its practical influence on our hearts. Then may we hope, ere long, to see "the Lamb that was slain, seated in the midst of the throne;" and, with our feeble voices, to make some little addition to the grand chorus of the redeemed, singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and who hath redeemed us to God by his blood."

## SERMON XLVI.

### THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

. Luke xxiv. 34.....*The Lord is risen indeed!*

**N**EVER was there a day of greater gladness than that on which our Lord arose; never was there greater cause for joy: for were not Christ risen, our faith and hope would be in vain, and we should yet be in our sins.

When Jesus Christ was laid in the grave, great was the triumph of his enemies; great the dejection of his friends. The sorrowful disciples had fondly hoped, "it had been He who should have redeemed Israel;" but, now their hopes are buried in his grave. How great then must have been their surprise, and their joy, when Jesus actually arose, and appeared to several of them. Our text is an exclamation, expressive of these passions; it was made by the ten apostles, to the two brethren, who had seen Christ at Emmaus, and who had just returned from thence to relate the joyful news. Before they could well speak, the apostles salute them with this pleasing sentence—"The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." The two disciples, in their turn, communicate what they had seen and heard, and how, "Jesus was known to them in breaking of bread." Blessed and heavenly news! well might they all be eager to tell it. The primitive Christians, it is said, used to salute each other on the Lord's day morning with these words, *The Lord is risen!* And it is a pleasing custom still continued in London, that the boys belonging to Christ's Hospital, appear in Easter week, each with a printed label affixed to his coat, having the same inscription, "The Lord is risen." Happy, if those poor children, or the multitude beholding them walk in procession to Church, knew the sacred import of that charming sentence. It will be happy for us, if now we are taught "the power of his resurrection;" and so contemplate these precious words "that our faith and hope may be in God."

We may place the words of our text in three points of view, and consider them as the language of

WONDER—CERTAINTY—and JOY.

I. Let us consider the words as expressive of their *Wonder*.

And yet, we wonder it should appear so wonderful to them. Had not our Lord often told them he should rise from the dead? Had he not said "Destroy this temple," meaning his body, "and in three days I will raise it up?" Had he not said "There shall no other sign be given to this generation than the sign of the prophet Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth?" Could the disciples forget these sayings? The Jews certainly remembered them, and, therefore, sealed and guarded the sepulchre. There were many intimations of the resurrection in the writings of the prophets. It was evident from the Scriptures, that "thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." Indeed, our Lord rested the whole weight of his mission on this event; to this he referred the whole credibility of all he asserted. It was, therefore, of infinite consequence to the disciples, that their Master should revive and forsake the tomb.

But who can describe the state of their minds, when they saw the Lord in the hands of his foes; bound, tried, condemned, executed, and laid in the prison of the grave? There was much ignorance and unbelief remaining in them. They had not wholly got rid of their foolish notion of a temporal kingdom; but their hopes of this kind were now completely baffled. They might also have many distressing apprehensions about their own personal safety. In short, they were perplexed and distressed beyond measure; and they had either forgotten what Christ had said of rising again, or did not clearly understand it, or desponded as to the event.

Great, therefore, was their surprise and astonishment, when first informed of his resurrection. Mary Magdalene, and some other pious women, were the first witnesses of the fact; they ran to inform Peter and John, who immediately hastened to the spot; they found the tomb open, and the grave clothes left in it, but saw not Jesus. But Peter afterwards saw him. He made himself known to the two disciples at Emmaus on the same day. The news quick-

ly spread among all, and though they were "slow of heart to believe," they were constrained to admit the fact; but they were overpowered with surprise and astonishment, and this they expressed in the text, "The Lord is risen indeed!" But

II. These words imply *THE CERTAINTY of this important fact*, "The Lord is risen, *indeed*,"—strange as it is, it is true; it is absolutely certain; we are perfectly satisfied of it. And this certainty was immediately afterwards abundantly confirmed; for, while they were yet speaking, he appeared in the midst of them; and, to convince them he was not a mere spirit, not only shewed them his wounded hands and feet, but also ate and drank with them.

The certainty of this event, is of the utmost consequence. This great pillar bears all the weight of the Christian system; and could the Samson of infidelity remove it, the whole fabric must fall to the ground. But blessed be God, we have no fears on this head. We know that "we have not followed cunningly devised fables," but that this grand truth comes to us confirmed by *many infallible proofs*, on which our faith securely rests, Acts i. 3. Let us examine some of these:

1. *The very fear of imposition* tended to this certainty. The chief priests having heard that Christ declared he should rise again, applied to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: So the last error shall be worse than the first." Matt. xxvii. 62. Pilate complied with their wishes. The huge stone that secured the entrance of the sepulchre was sealed with the public seal, which none might break upon pain of death; and a strong guard of soldiers was placed to defend the whole. But how vain is it for man to fight with God! The stone, the seal, the guard, can never keep the Lord of life a prisoner to death; but they all tended exceedingly to confirm the truth of his resurrection. Had these malicious precautions been omitted, we had lost one of the strongest proofs of the event.

The ignorance or the forgetfulness of the disciples re-



specting his rising again; their cowardice at the time, rendering them totally unfit to venture to steal the body, had they been so disposed; and their incredulity, when first told that he was risen; all unite in strengthening the evidence; but especially the unbelief of Thomas, who for a whole week persisted in refusing to believe any evidence but that of his own senses, which at length was granted.

2. *The number of witnesses* to the fact strongly confirms it. Mary Magdalene was the first. Much was forgiven her, and she loved much; her love was rewarded with this honour. She first saw Jesus, and mistook him for the gardener; but she knew her Shepherd's voice, and owned her Lord, by whose direction she runs to tell the apostles. Next, he appeared to the other Mary, and Salome, when they were flying from the empty tomb, terrified at the sight of the angel. *Jesus met them saying, All hail!* they held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Peter was then favoured with a sight of his risen Lord. Marvellous kindness to the man who had deserted and denied him! Let it stand as a proof of Christ's regard to penitent backsliders. In the afternoon, on the same day, he joined company with two disciples, walking to a village seven miles from Jerusalem. They knew him not at first: but he talked to them—so sweetly opened the Scriptures, and shewed the necessity of the resurrection, that their hearts glowed with holy fire. He condescended also to sup with them. It was then, while “he brake the bread and blessed it,” in a manner peculiar to himself, that they recollected his person. Fired with love, and filled with joy, they swiftly retrace the seven miles back to the city; and eager to publish the glad event, they hasten to the chamber of the apostles where they relate “what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking bread.”

Immediately “Jesus appears in the midst;” mild majesty beaming in his placid countenance, and heavenly consolation flowing from his lips, *Peace be unto you.* When they discovered fear, he added, *Why are you troubled? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.* And when he had spoken thus, he shewed them his hands and his feet; there they saw the certain marks of his sufferings, and his identity was fully proved. Nor

did he immediately vanish; he continued with them a considerable time. He shewed them from the Scriptures, the necessity of his resurrection; upbraided them with their unbelief; and, to put the matter out of all doubt, he offered to eat with them, and did actually eat a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb. Luke xxiv. 42.

During forty days that followed this event, he met them frequently in different places instructing them at large "in things pertaining to the kingdom of God." At one of these seasons, Thomas was perfectly convinced, and, with profound reverence and adoration, cries, "My Lord, and my God!" He appeared upon another occasion "to above five hundred brethren at once," most of whom were alive when St. Paul recorded it. 1 Cor. xv. 6. Surely it was impossible that all these witnesses could be deceived, and it is equally impossible they could mean to deceive others, for

3. *They were credible witnesses*, they were sufficient judges of what they saw and heard, and they could have no temptation to impose upon the world. No temporal advantage could be looked for; but, on the contrary, all the terrors of persecution, which many of them actually endured; but they lived and died steadfastly witnessing to this fundamental truth.

4. *The very Heathen admitted the fact*. Pilate wrote to Tiberius, the Roman emperor, assuring him that Christ, who was a very extraordinary person, and who had been put to death at Jerusalem, was risen again. And Tiberius proposed to the senate at Rome, that his name should be enrolled among the number of their gods.

5. *The weakness of those who denied the fact*, tends to its confirmation. The soldiers, who composed the guard, being affrighted by the earthquake, which happened at the moment of the resurrection, ran into the city to inform their employers what had taken place. Upon which the elders called a council, to consider what must be done to prevent the belief of Christ's resurrection: when it was determined to bribe the soldiers, and put this lie in their mouths—"Say ye his disciples came by night and stole him away, *while we slept*." What a palpable contradiction does this excuse contain! If the soldiers were asleep, how could they know this? and if they were not asleep, how

could the disciples effect it? But they were *not* asleep. It was death to a Roman soldier to sleep on his watch. And who, that considers the cowardice of the disciples at the time, can ever believe that they would venture upon so difficult and hazardous a business? But the priests had the villainy to invent the lie, the soldiers had the baseness to propagate it, and the Jews had the folly to believe it; and justly may God give up men to "strong delusion to believe a lie," who will not be persuaded, even by miracles to believe the truth.

Surely these are *infallible* proofs, that we may safely express our certainty of the event, by saying, "The Lord is risen *indeed!*" The important fact being thus ascertained, let us, in the last place, consider the text, as

### III. The language of Joy.

In prospect of this grand event the prophet says, Psalm cxviii. 24. "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoice therein." The world never saw such a day before. There was joy in heaven, and joy on earth.

"A morning then dawned, which is to be followed by no evening; a brighter sun arose upon the world which is to set no more; a day began which shall never end; and night and darkness departed to return not again." "Then were the disciples *glad* when they saw the Lord;" and well they might! They had often seen him with delight, but never so much as now. Christ himself proposes this as an argument of joy—"I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold *I am alive for ever more!* Amen." Consider we now the causes of joy.

1. Hereby the truth of his mission was fully confirmed. This is the *Broad Seal* of heaven, affixed to his credentials; "The sign of Jonas the prophet," to which he referred. "He was declared to be the Son of God, *with power*, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Rom. i. 4. He was publicly demonstrated to be the Son of God, by the immediate power of the Holy Spirit; owned in the face of the world, and freed from all suspicion of being an impostor.

2. The sufficiency and acceptableness of his sacrifice was hereby acknowledged. The apostle truly argues, 1 Cor. xv. 17. If Christ be not risen, we are yet *in our sins*—un-

der the guilt and power of them, condemned for ever; since they could never be taken away but by the sacrifice of Christ, and if he were not risen, there could be no proof that he had taken them away. But, blessed be God, he is risen, that our faith and hope might rise too. *The God of Peace* hath brought again from the dead the Great Shepherd of the sheep; for he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. When he was discharged from the prison of the grave, God declared in effect, that the ransom price was paid, the full penalty of the law which required death was borne, justice was entirely satisfied, reconciliation was made, and pardon and peace procured through the blood of atonement.

Hence spring the lively hopes of the Christian. Thus Peter sang—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Thus Paul triumphed, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, *yea, rather that is risen again.*" Rom. viii. 33.

3. The resurrection of Christ is the cause of our spiritual resurrection, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. This is what St. Paul principally designed in that pious wish—"That I may know *the power of his resurrection!*" Phil. iii. 10.—to experience that divine power in my soul, quickening me to a life of grace, which Christ experienced in quickening his dead body in the grave;" and, indeed, it requires a power no less. None but God can quicken a poor, lifeless, carnal soul, dead in pleasure, dead to God, dead in sin. But virtually, all believers were "quickened together with Christ:" the whole body was quickened together, the members with the head; and, in due time, by virtue of union with him, and the power of the Spirit in them, they shall be "planted together both in the likeness of his death, and of his resurrection;" that so, as "he died unto sin once, but now liveth unto God," so shall they be "dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 10.

4 The resurrection of Christ is a cause of joy, as it was



introductory to his ascension to heaven, his intercession there, and setting up his new and everlasting kingdom. Immediately after he arose, he said to Mary—"Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." All this was no less necessary to our complete salvation, than his sufferings and death. Because he lives, his people shall live also. Because he intercedes, "he is able to save them to the uttermost." Because he reigns, they shall be secured. Because he is enthroned, they shall also be glorified. The resurrection necessarily preceded all these, and therefore, with them is a cause of joy unspeakable.

5. The resurrection of Christ affords to believers a certain pledge, and infallible assurance, of their joyful resurrection to eternal life. The one is inseparably connected with the other; they stand or fall together; for, saith St. Paul, "If Christ rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead?—we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. But now is Christ risen, and become *the first fruits* of them that slept." Jesus Christ arose as a public person; as the forerunner and representative of all his people. He arose as a mighty conqueror over death, and his resurrection was graced with that of many bodies of the saints, who appeared to their friends in Jerusalem, to testify the grand event. Thus, "as by Adam came death, by Jesus Christ came the resurrection of the dead;" and, as surely as the first fruits were gathered, so surely shall the whole harvest be safely collected. Of all that were given to Christ, the bodies of his people included, nothing shall be lost; and he has promised to raise them up at the last day, for "they are the children of the resurrection."

APPLICATION.—And now,—How are our hearts affected by this glorious subject! The first disciples were filled with joy; they congratulated each other saying "the Lord is risen indeed!" The fact is now familiar to us, so that the relation may not occasion *wonder*; but, are we satisfied as to the *certainty* of it? If it be *not* true, there is no truth in christianity. If it *be* true, then christianity is also true. The whole religion of Christ stands on this firm

foundation, and is so connected with it, that every part is confirmed together with it. This establishes the whole revelation that he made of God, and heaven and hell. This ratifies all his doctrines concerning man as a sinner, and himself as a Saviour. It confirms his authority to rule and govern the Church; and it obliges us to believe that he will fulfil all his promises to his people, and all his threatenings to his enemies. And it especially strengthens our faith in the belief of the general resurrection at the last day. For, after *his* resurrection, thus evidenced, "Why should it be thought incredible that God should raise the dead? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? All things are possible to him. He *can* raise the dead, for he is Almighty; and he *will* raise them, for he has promised to do so."

"There shall then be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust." *All men* shall be raised. But, O, in what a different manner, and to what different destinations! Hear how Christ himself describes it. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life: and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." How important is our present state and conduct! We shall come forth from our graves such as we enter in: and how soon may we enter! What then is our present state? Are we convinced of sin? Humbled for sin? Have we believed in Jesus, and fled for refuge to him? Does our faith work by love, so that we *do good*? This is the proper fruit and evidence of faith, and what will be called over at the judgment day. O that then we may be "found in Christ," justified by his righteousness; while our faith in that righteousness is justified by its good and holy fruits.

The Lord is risen! Blessed and delightful truth! The Lord is risen, indeed! Then we may say with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and because he liveth, I shall live also. He is the resurrection and the life. Believing in him, though I were dead, yet shall I live; and now, living and believing in him, I shall *never* die. John 11. What have I to fear? God is reconciled; he is the

God of peace, who raised up Jesus from the dead. Justice is satisfied, for the debt is discharged, and the prisoner is released. If any accusation is made, I have "the answer of a good conscience, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead," for "who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again."

And if we are thus "risen with Christ, through the faith of the operation of God," let us "seek those things which are above;" let us "set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Are we united to Christ? He is in heaven, preparing places for us; let us follow him in the affections and desires of our hearts. This world is not our rest and portion. "We are dead" to it, by profession and obligation, "and our life is hid with Christ in God." The life of grace is a secret life, of which Christ is the author and the keeper; and, "when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory,"—When he who began, who supports, and will complete the spiritual life in us, shall appear as the Judge of the world in all his glory, then shall our mortal bodies be quickened by his Spirit which dwelleth in us, and resemble his own glorious body; then shall the creature itself, (the animal frame,) be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and be introduced into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

"With joy, like Christ's, shall every Saint  
His empty tomb survey;  
Then rise, with his ascending Lord,  
To realms of endless day."

## SERMON XLVII.

### THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Acts ii. 4.....*And they were filled with the Holy Ghost.*

**A**MONG the ancient predictions of Gospel times and Gospel blessings, the prophecy of Joel is none of the least—"It shall come to pass in the last days," saith God, "*I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh,*" &c. St. Peter, under the immediate influences of that Spirit, assures us in this chapter, verse 16, that the promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost—"This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." John the Baptist, the harbinger of Christ, had also said to his disciples, "I indeed baptize you with *water*, but he shall baptize you with the *Holy Ghost*, and with *fire*." Our Lord himself comforted his disciples with a fresh promise of this great blessing, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, which is the Holy Ghost; the Spirit of truth; who shall teach you all things; who shall be in you, and abide with you for ever." John xiv. 16, 17, 26. Our risen Saviour, when just about to ascend up to glory, renewed the promise, assuring them it should be fulfilled in a few days, and commanded them to abide in Jerusalem till it was accomplished. In dependence upon his word, and expectation of the blessing, "they all continued, with one accord, in prayer and supplication."

The joyful day arrived.—It was the *Lord's day*—It was also the day of *Pentecost*; a day observed by the Jews in memory of giving the law at Mount Sinai, about 1500 years before. On this day they presented the first fruits of their harvest to God. How highly was this day honoured! A new sanction was given to the observation of the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath; the law of faith was first published from Mount Sion; and the first fruits of a glorious harvest of saved sinners were presented to God. And thus our Lord, who had been crucified at the Passover feast, fifty days before, was glorified at the



feast of weeks; upon both which occasions there was a vast assemblage of people at Jerusalem.

“The day of Pentecost was fully come.” The disciples, obedient to their Master’s order, were assembled together, with unanimous affection, in the same place, waiting for the promised comforter; when “suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.” This was not only to engage their attention, but to serve as an emblem of the powerful influences of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men; for by the energy of his sacred operations the whole world was to be shaken. Our Lord had made use of the emblem of wind, or air in motion, when he discoursed with Nicodemus on regeneration—“The wind bloweth where it listeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” As the wind, or air, is the food of natural life, so is the Holy Spirit the beginner and supporter of spiritual life. Thus Jesus, after his resurrection, “breathed upon the apostles, saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” John xx. 22. Perhaps he alluded to the creation of man at first, when “the Lord God breathed into his nostrils *the breath of life* (or lives,) and man became a living soul.” Gen. ii. 7. As the *vital air* is necessary to our existence in the body, so the Spirit of God is necessary to our spiritual existence, or living to God. There was a striking emblem of the same kind, in the parable of the dry bones, Ezek. xxxvii. When Ezekiel, according to God’s command, prophesied to them, “*there was a noise*, and a shaking; the bones came together; the flesh came upon them; and the skin covered them; but there was *no breath* in them: then the Lord said, Prophecy to the wind, and say, Come from the four winds, O breath of the Lord, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” This parable, or vision, fitly represents, not only the political state of the Jews and their recovery, but also the deplorable condition of men, dead in trespasses and in sins, and their revival to spiritual life by the word and Spirit of Christ; and it shows there may be a lifeless form of godliness, but that the power and life is from the Holy Ghost, “for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” This great truth seems to have been intimated by “the mighty rushing wind.”

Another very remarkable sign accompanied the descent of the Spirit on the disciples—"There appeared unto them *cloven tongues, like as of fire*, and it sat upon each of them;" a bright appearance over the head of each, resembling a tongue, terminating in several points—a very suitable emblem of the "gift of tongues," which was then granted to them; for, at that moment "they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with *other tongues*, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The intention of this miracle was to enable them at once, to speak the language of every country to which they might be sent to preach the Gospel; and this ability was attained, not in the ordinary and slow way of learning a foreign tongue, as we do, but in a moment, as an attestation to the truth of the Gospel. The dividing of tongues at Babel, proved the unhappy means of losing the true knowledge of the true God; but by this new division of tongues, the knowledge of God in Christ was restored, and readily communicated to men of every nation. A specimen of this was immediately afforded: for, as this happened at the time of a great festival, there were then in Jerusalem devout Jews, who did not usually reside there, but *sojourned* there, having visited the temple from all parts of the known world; and when, upon the report of what had happened, the multitude were gathered together, they were quite confounded and amazed; for every one of this various assembly heard one or other of the apostles and disciples, as they addressed themselves by turns to people of a different language, speaking to them in his own proper dialect. And they were all amazed at this wonderful event, knowing that the speakers were all Galileans: yet, did they, who before knew no language but their own, speak to this mixed assembly in a great variety of tongues.

This was a wonderful testimony to the truth of the Gospel which they preached; and it was intended to put an honour upon preaching the word: it is the appointment of God for the conversion of sinners; it is "the power of God to salvation;" and therefore the first miracle, after the Spirit was given, was to enable his servants to preach it.

The tongues were of *fire*. Thus the prophecy was fulfilled—"he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with *fire*." And does not this emblem denote the *illuminating* and *animating* nature of divine truth?—When the Gospel is attended with the power of the Spirit, it both *enlightens* and *warms* the heart. Gospel truths are not cold speculations; they afford both light and heat; they purify the mind, purge away the dross of sensuality, and make the soul mount heavenward. Thus the hearts of the two disciples "burnt within them," when Jesus walked with them, and opened up the Scriptures. Come, O celestial flame, come and sit upon *us* also; enlighten *our* darkness, purify our affections, consume our corruptions, and fill us with thyself!

And do not these *tongues of fire* speak a lesson to all the ministers of the Gospel? Do they not intimate the manner in which they ought to preach the truth?—Not with cold indifference or frozen formality, but like John, who was "a burning and a shining light," with fervency of spirit, and vigour of affections, as men in earnest, believing and feeling what they speak, anxious for the glory of Christ, and eager to win souls.

What was the *subject* which first engaged the heaven-taught tongues of the disciples?—*The wonderful works of God*—"We do hear them speak in our own tongues—the wonderful works of God"—the great things of God—the magnificent, stupendous things of God. And what were they? Surely they were those "things of Christ" which the Spirit was given to show them, that they might "glorify him;" the person, miracles, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, together with this effusion of the Spirit; in a word, the glorious salvation of the Son of God; and these will always be the favourite topics of those ministers whose tongues are touched with the flame of the altar.

The multitude who witnessed this remarkable scene were all in a mixture of amazement and perplexity, and said to one another, What can this mean? The pious and devout were thus affected; but their minds were prepared to listen to the voice of God, as soon as they were convinced it was his. Others, probably the native Jews, who un-

derstood none of these foreign languages, and heard only unintelligible sounds, derided them, ascribing their preaching to intoxication. "These men," said they, "are full of new wine." Let us not wonder if, in our day, the preaching of the Gospel is treated in the same manner. There always have been mockers, to whom the Gospel of Christ has been foolishness.—The Lord pity and pardon them !

Then Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, standing up with the eleven apostles, lifted up his voice, and addressed the multitude. He begged them to have so much candour, as not rashly to conclude them to be men overcome with liquor, especially by nine o'clock in the morning ; an hour in which, it should seem no Jew was ever known to be drunk. But he directs their attention to a well-known passage of Scripture, a prophecy of Joel, in which the Lord says—*It shall come to pass, in the last days, that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams : and on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out, in those days, of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy : and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* The apostle declares this prophecy to be then fulfilling ; and proceeds to shew them that Jesus of Nazareth, whom God approved among them by many miracles, and whom they had lately crucified, was the true Messiah, the Son of God ; and that, while they gratified their own wicked passions in putting him to death, they had fulfilled the divine decrees concerning him. But that all their malice had been in vain, for God had raised him up, according to the prophecies of David. Peter declares himself and his brethren witnesses of his resurrection from the dead, and affirms that his divine master, having ascended to heaven, had sent down, on that day, the promised Spirit, whose operations on his disciples they now beheld.

The design of this sermon was to convince them of sin, which is the first work of the Holy Spirit ; and the Lord crowned it with vast success. Multitudes were pierced to the heart with a sense of their guilt, and especially with the guilt incurred by the murder of Christ ; and, filled with



terror and perplexity, they applied to the apostles for advice, saying, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter, agreeably to the Lord's direction, "preached repentance and remission of sins in his name, beginning at Jerusalem." Here is a fine specimen of Gospel preaching: he exhorts the vilest sinners to repent; encouraging them thereto by the hope of the full pardon of all their sins, upon believing in Jesus; "and with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

Wonderful was the success of this day—three thousand souls converted to God at once! Most of them, probably, bigotted Jews, ignorantly attached to the law of Moses, and bitter enemies of Jesus Christ.—Many of them, perhaps, had cried, "Crucify him, crucify him!" and had said, his blood be upon us and upon our children." Surprising grace! What mercy, what power, was that day displayed! What cannot God do? Three thousand *converted*; not merely alarmed, but changed in heart. Their sincerity was manifest: they sacrificed all their worldly interest to Christ: the pardon of sin filled their hearts with gladness: they were all love and liberality: and they continued stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers; praising God, and having favour with all the people.

Glorious confirmation, this, of the truth of the Gospel! Delightful encouragement to the preachers of it! Charming specimen of its happy effects, and blessed first fruits of an extensive harvest! O for another out-pouring of the blessed Spirit upon the churches! Such we expect, in fulfilment of many precious promises. In the mean time, may we be the happy subjects and witnesses of the ordinary work of the Spirit in the conversion of sinners, and in the edification of the saints. And this *stated work* of the Holy Spirit is what we shall now, in the second place, consider.

We have taken a brief view of the glorious events which took place on the day of Pentecost. We have seen the apostles, and probably the rest of the hundred and twenty disciples, endued with the gift of tongues. This gift, to-

gether with the power of healing diseases, casting out devils, with many other miraculous works, was long continued in the church; perhaps above an hundred years. These are generally called the *extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit. These have long since ceased. When Christianity was established, there was no longer occasion for them. But, have *all* the operations of the Spirit ceased? Some say so: but we deny it. We allow that the *extraordinary powers* just mentioned are withdrawn: but we affirm, and think it an affirmation of prime importance, that the *gracious influences* of the Holy Spirit, on the minds ~~of~~ believers, are still continued, and that there is no true vital religion without them.

The *extraordinary gifts* at first possessed by Christians, did not, necessarily, imply those *gracious influences* for which we plead. It is probable that some had the former, who were destitute of the latter; for St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. &c. seems to intimate, that a person might speak with various tongues, have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, and work miracles, and yet not have *love*, an eminent "fruit of the Spirit;" from which we conclude, that the ordinary and gracious operations of the Spirit upon the souls of men may be continued, although his miraculous gifts are withdrawn: and we shall prove that the former are promised to be continued in the church, and that they are now as necessary to make men Christians, as they were in the apostles' days.

When our Lord promised to send his Holy Spirit to his disciples, he assured them that he should *abide with them* FOR EVER, John xiv. 16.—he was to *abide*—to continue with them, not for three or four years, as our Lord had done, but *for ever*; and as this presence of the Comforter was to supply the place of Christ on earth, we may safely conclude, that the promise extended not to the apostles only, but, like his intercession, John xvii. 20. "to them also who should believe on him, through their word," even unto the end of the world.

The Holy Spirit is promised, John vii. 38. as the common privilege of all believers.—"He that believeth in me, out of his belly, or heart, shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him

should receive." This promise is not confined to believers of the first century, or to the age of miracles; it is as much a promise to believers at large, as any other in the New Testament. A similar promise is made, John iv. 14.

The Holy Spirit is said to *dwell* in believers, 1 Cor. iii. 16. and vi. 19. "The Spirit of God dwelleth in you;" "your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." This is spoken to the whole body of Corinthian Christians, without a single hint that the blessing was intended to be confined to them, or to Christians of that age only. Were we to admit that expressions of this kind, respecting the Spirit, must be confined to the first believers, we should be obliged to admit the same restriction as to all the privileges, tempers, and duties of Christians in general. And indeed, those who deny the work of the Spirit, do generally give up all the essentials of the Gospel, and leave us nothing but a system of mere morality—a refined heathenism, graced with the name of Christ. And we may seriously "advise persons to be cautious of confining the Spirit to primitive times, lest they confine heaven to primitive times, and so miss of it themselves; for indeed there is no going to heaven without receiving the Holy Spirit."

This will appear still more clearly, if we consider *for what purposes* he is given to the church: we shall then see that there is always the same occasion for his gracious influences as there was at first.

The whole dispensation of the Gospel is called—*The ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 8. The whole business of Gospel salvation, from first to last, is in the hands of the Spirit. Not only at first, but in all ages, he calls, qualifies, and assists the ministers of the Gospel in preaching it; and all its efficacy in the world is from the power of his grace.

*Illumination* is his work. No truth of the Gospel is rightly understood but by his teaching. He was promised as "the Spirit of Truth," who was to "glorify Christ," by "showing the things of Christ" to men. This is fully proved by those words of St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man (that is, every man by nature) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness

into him ; *neither can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned:" that is, they are known only by the teaching of the Spirit, in the use of the word. Now, as all real Christians are illuminated and taught of God, it is evidently necessary that they should all have the Spirit: and if the Spirit be not given, then no man in the world knows, or can know, the things of God.

Again, all real Christians are *praying persons* ; but no man knows " how to pray, nor what to pray for," without his assistance ; and therefore it is mentioned, Rom. viii. 26. as the common privilege of all believers, that " the Spirit itself helpeth our infirmities" in this duty ; which shews that all Christians, in all ages, need the influence of the Spirit.

Our Saviour, in his discourse with Nicodemus, (John iii.) strongly insisted on the necessity of *regeneration*, or the new birth, solemnly declaring, that " unless a man be born again, or born of the Spirit, he could not be saved." This then shows, that every Christian must needs have the Spirit, for he is the author of that inward change, without which no man is inwardly a Christian.

*Sanctification* is also the privilege of all true believers ; they are " elect, according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through *sanctification of the Spirit*." 1 Pet. ii. 2. No man can be saved who is not sanctified, and no man can be sanctified but by the Spirit.

The Holy Ghost was promised " to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." But will any person say, it is less necessary now to be convinced of sin, &c. than at first? Can there be any repentance without it? Certainly not: and if not, then the Spirit is as necessary **as ever**.

He is also called the *Spirit of Faith*.—He is the *Comforter*, the *Seal*, the *Witness*, the *First Fruits* of heaven. No man then can have faith in Christ, spiritual joy and comfort, nor any evidence for heaven, unless he have the Holy Spirit. This might be more abundantly proved from a great number of texts and arguments, but the narrow limits of a short sermon forbid.\*

\* The necessity of Divine Influences is displayed, in a very pleasing manner by Mr T. Williams, in his book, called, "An historic Defence



APPLICATION—*Have ye received the Holy Ghost?* said St. Paul, to some early disciples. We ask the same question—*Have ye received the Holy Ghost?* We have proved the necessity of his sacred influences: do we know any thing of them by experience? Remember what the Scripture says, Rom. viii. 9. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” And how awful must their portion be, who are not his! The whole world is under the dominion either of the good Spirit of God, or of the evil spirit, “who worketh in the hearts of all the children of disobedience.” It is therefore of the greatest importance for us to consider, under whose influence we act.—“If we sow to the flesh, we shall reap corruption; if we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.” By our fruits are we known. “The fruits of the Spirit are love, and joy, and peace, and goodness, and meekness, and temperance.”—“The works of the flesh are adultery, fornication, hatred, drunkenness, &c. and they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” What does our conduct say? O conscience be faithful—give a true verdict! Does it appear that you are a stranger to his grace, in enlightening the mind, renewing the will, convincing of sin, leading the soul to Christ, and sanctifying the whole man? Know then, that your state is deplorable and dangerous. May you be sensible of it: and, if you are, you will earnestly pray to God to give you his Spirit, which he has promised to them that ask him.

To those who know the Lord, the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost will appear exceedingly glorious. Such persons will rejoice to think that his gracious influence is still continued in the church. Above all, they will be continually desirous to experience it. All the light, love, peace, joy, and consolation to be found in the religion of Jesus, spring from his constant operations. Honour, then, this blessed Spirit, by seeking his daily assistance.—When you pray, read, hear, or perform any spiritual action, seek his help. Thus shall you “be filled with all joy and peace in believing; thus shall “the love of God be shed abroad in your hearts;” thus shall you  
of Experimental Religion, as supported by the authority of Scripture, and the experience of the wisest and best men in all ages,” &c.

“abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost ;” and having this experience, you possess “the seal” of God, and “the earnest” of heaven ; “for he that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God, who hath also given us of his Spirit.” This is the grand evidence of our being Christians indeed ; and “hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.”

To the blessed Spirit of all grace ; to Jesus Christ the only Saviour ; and to the Father of mercies ; the one covenant-God of our Salvation, be glory, in all the churches, world without end. Amen.

“Let thy kind Spirit in my heart  
For ever dwell, O God of Love !  
And light and heavenly peace impart,  
Sweet earnest of the joys above.”

## SERMON XLVIII.

CHRIST OUR BENEFACTOR.

Acts x. 38.....*Who went about doing good.*

By the Rev. SAMUEL GREATHEED.\*

THE apostle Peter said this of our Lord Jesus Christ. The occasion of his saying it shows us that the Spirit of God works upon the minds of men, and inclines them to serve him, even before they know how to serve him in a right manner. In this case, they are very glad and thankful to be taught the will of God. Do *you*, brethren, wish to know how you may please God, and become “wise to salvation?” If we did not wish to do you *good* we

\* This discourse was composed by Mr. Greatheed, solely for the use of some persons who visited the villages near Newport-Pagnell, Bucks, and who read written or printed sermons to the people, and before the publication of the first volume of Village Sermons ; consequently without any intention of its publication from the press. But it appears in this volume by the particular desire of Mr. Burder, who wishes it to stand as a token of his unfeigned respect for the Author, and a memorial of their mutual friendship.

should not come to you. The Lord is altogether good, and is always doing good. We may surely hope he will do us good *now*, if we are truly desirous of knowing his will.

We find, from this chapter, that the words of the text were spoken by Peter to Cornelius, who was an officer in the Roman army, and had been brought up a heathen and an idolater. He was quartered among the Jews, who were the only nation at that time that knew there is only *one* God, who is eternal and holy. Cornelius learned from them this doctrine, which is the ground of all true religion; and he prayed to God, as every body should do, who believes there is a God. If *you* do not pray to God you are worse than the heathens, for they do not know there is a God to pray to. Besides this, we are told that Cornelius feared God with all his house. Do *you* try to lead your families and friends to know and serve God? If not, you see, that instead of being true Christians, you come far short of what Cornelius did, before he ever heard the Gospel of Christ.

They who do not pray to God are without excuse, because God assures us, in his word, that he hears and answers prayer. The history of Cornelius gives a proof of it. The apostle Peter was preaching the Gospel at a place about forty miles distant from the town where Cornelius lived. The Lord informed Cornelius of this, and told him to send for Peter to come and instruct him. Peter accordingly came, and preached Jesus Christ to all who had met on the occasion; showing them how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; *who went about doing good*. He told them also much more about Jesus Christ; and, indeed, if he had not preached about Christ, he need not have come there. "Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" by whom alone a sinner can find mercy with God. Wherever the apostles went they preached Christ. This is one mark by which you may know who they are that preach most like the apostles. If you hear little or nothing about Christ, you are likely to get little or no good.

The apostle Peter informed Cornelius and his family, that the doctrine he had to deliver, was the same which

they must have heard of, as it had been published throughout all the neighbouring country of Judea; and had, indeed, been first preached in Galilee, the country where they then were. You, perhaps, may think it strange, that Cornelius had not enquired about it sooner; but the reason probably was, that Christianity was then every where spoken against; the apostles and disciples of Christ were suspected, even by their own countrymen, the Jews, to be either mad or wicked men, because they worshipped God in a way different from that which was established by law; and because they continued preaching Christ to their neighbours, when it was opposed and forbidden by the great people and rulers. If you read the book of the Acts you will see this was the case; and you will not be surprised at it, if you consider that Jesus Christ himself was *crucified*, (which is like being hanged in our country) for both the rulers and the mob accused him of the vilest crimes. But the prejudices of Cornelius were now removed, and it was an excellent disposition which he discovered, when he said to the apostle, "Now, therefore, we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." May the Lord give us, *now*, the same disposition!

One thing which Peter told Cornelius concerning Jesus Christ was, that "he went about doing good." If Cornelius had heard any thing of Christ before, it might be that he went about doing *harm*. Christ had been charged by the Jews with treason and blasphemy. He had been tried, condemned, and executed as a malefactor. Cornelius was likely, from the common report, to have a very bad opinion of Christ. He determined, however, to hear all that Peter had to say in behalf of Christ; and then to judge for himself. Let us all be careful how we take matters upon *hear-say*, especially about religion and religious people.

Peter convinced Cornelius that Jesus Christ went about doing *good*. So far as you know the history of Christ, you are doubtless convinced, that he did not go about to hurt people, but to do them good. Even those ignorant and foolish persons who deny that Christ was sent from *heaven*, own that he did good in some respects. But what



we should desire to know is, Whether he *can*, and *will*, do *us* good? If we do not obtain good from Christ in this life, and in that to come, we might as well never have heard of him.

As to the *power* of Christ to do *us* good, we have reason to trust in it, from the wonderful power he had to do good to all, as long as he was upon earth. His works were such as no man ever did before nor since. He satisfied the hunger of many thousands of people, with a very few small loaves and fishes. By merely touching or even speaking to weak and sick persons, he cured them of the most desperate diseases. He raised up several people from death to life; one man who had been buried some days, was restored to his afflicted relations. In that age of the world, when God was so little known, the devil was worshipped by many; and he was permitted to torment the bodies of mankind in a shocking manner: but no wicked spirit could keep possession of any person who was brought to Christ for relief. One word from him was enough to restore any one to perfect health and reason. The power of Christ was also shewn in preserving his disciples in a dreadful storm at sea. He said to the wind and the waves "Be still," and they became perfectly calm in a moment. But it is not possible now to tell you a hundredth part of the proofs that Jesus gave of his power to do good to those around him. The four Gospels are full of such accounts; yet, at the close of the last, St. John says, "there were also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." People in general are fond of reading and hearing wonderful things. Now there is no true history, nor scarcely any story that contains things so wonderful as those which Jesus did for the good of mankind. Yet they are all certainly true, for they were written by four different persons, who saw what they relate; who were honest and good men: who did good like their Master; and suffered themselves to be put to death rather than deny what they knew to be true, or keep silence about it. You would do well, as often as you can, to take up your bibles, and read the history of Jesus Christ; and also consider whenever

you read it, what was his reason for doing good in such surprising ways? Why was the history of his actions written over and over again, and handed down to us, so many hundred years after? The whole must surely be meant for *our* good. It would be tantalizing you to tell you of his doing so much good to others, if *you* could get no good from him. You suffer pains and wants; your relations and neighbours are afflicted; if Christ was now upon earth, he might do them the same good he formerly did to others. But if you read the Scriptures with care, you may see that Jesus took more pains to *teach* people than to heal them. He performed all these miracles to gain their attention, and their belief of what he taught. His doctrine could do them much greater good than the healing of their diseases. If you could be certain that God forgave all your sins, and would give you eternal life, would you not think it a greater benefit than merely to be cured of a bodily complaint? The doctrine of Christ was, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." And, accordingly, he healed one man of the palsy, on purpose to shew he could forgive his sins. When the poor creature was brought to our Lord, his first words to him were, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." Some who were present murmured at his pretending to forgive sins; but he soon silenced them. "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," said he, turning to the poor man, "I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house." And immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all. See the 2d chapter of St. Mark.

Now, brethren, what think ye of the *power* of Christ to do good? Nothing could be more true or just than the principle upon which the Jews reasoned among themselves—"Who can forgive sins, but God only?" But you see our Lord Jesus Christ *did* forgive sins; and proved his power to do so, by working a miracle. It is plain, therefore, that Jesus Christ is God. All of you have, probably, been told so from your infancy; but now you see it cannot be otherwise. On this account, the Scriptures call him "*Immanuel*," which signifies "*God with us*;" they

also call him "*the Son of God*;" having the same nature with his Father; and they declare that "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father," for He and the Father are one: they also call him "the word of God," and then say "the word was God."

Now as our Lord Jesus Christ is "God over all, blessed for evermore," his power to do good must be boundless, and always the same. You have seen that he worked a miracle to prove that, whilst on earth, he had power to forgive sins; and surely, now he is exalted to heaven, he must have the same power. If, whilst he was on earth, in the form of a servant, he had this power, you cannot reasonably doubt that, now he reigns in heaven, king of the world, "he is able even to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by him."

And do you not all *need* his pardoning mercy? Have you not transgressed his holy law? Remember it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things, commanded in the book of the law, to do them." Galatians iii. 10. If you have obeyed it in *some* respects, or even in *most* things, this will not excuse you for having disobeyed or neglected it in others. The law of God admits of no composition; and makes no allowance for any failure whatever. The apostle James assures us (chap. ii. verse 10.) that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, excepting in *one* point, and offends in that, he is guilty of all." And the reason he gives for this is, that it is the same authority which enforces each of the commandments; so that whoever disobeys any one of them tramples upon all the authority of God. Instead, therefore, of enquiring who can forgive sins *but* God, it might be asked, How can God himself forgive sins committed against that law which he himself hath given to mankind for the rule of their conduct, and by which he has appointed that men should be judged?—This question must for ever have perplexed a convinced sinner, if the Gospel had not told us that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:" for "God made him to be a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 19, 21. On this ground there is encouragement to hope for pardon. "There

is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared." Yea, "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." So that, if any of you have been distressed and terrified on account of your sins, you see it is not right for you to *despair* of forgiveness. Christ was crucified, that he might bear the punishment due to your sins; and, after being buried, he performed the greatest miracle of all, in raising up his own body, by his own power, from the grave; in order that he might prove he had fully discharged the debt which sinners had incurred. He afterwards ascended up to heaven; and, in some of his last words to his disciples, said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 15, 16. We are all under condemnation; for all have sinned. No obedience that we can pay in future to the law of God, can make amends for past sins. But Christ has power to forgive them, "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." When a certain person came to Christ on earth, he seemed to doubt his power to help, saying, "If thou *canst* do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." Jesus said unto him, "If thou *canst believe*, all things are possible to him that believeth." "Lord," answered the poor man, with tears, "I believe; help thou my unbelief!" So, under your fears about the possibility of your sins being forgiven, go to Jesus by prayer; plead that he has said, "He that believeth shall be saved," and cry, "Lord, I believe, help *thou* mine unbelief."

I hope you are now satisfied as to the *power* of Jesus to do you good. If so, it should be your chief concern to know whether he is *WILLING also to do you good*, and *all* the good that you need. May the Spirit of Christ make you as earnest on this point, as reasonable creatures, with the word of God before them, ought to be! What would it profit you, if you could gain the whole world, and should lose your own souls? You think, perhaps, but little of this *now*. But you are near the hour of death; you don't know *how* near. And if you have your reason then, you will wonder how you could have been so stupid through



your lives, as not to be concerned, above all things, to know whether Christ was willing to save your souls. It may *then* be too late, and you would, in vain, give the whole world for a few minutes time like those which we yet have to spend together. But, “*now*,” I have to declare to you, from the Scriptures, “*now* is the accepted time ; *now* is the day of salvation.” “ O seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near ! ”

You have heard that Jesus Christ is the ever blessed God : be assured then, from the gracious character in which God has revealed himself in his word, that he will not despise any soul that is truly humbled and contrite on account of his sin. “ The tender mercy of God is over all his works.” You see, every day, what compassion he shows to the evil and unthankful. His rain descends, and his sun-beams shine on the land of the wicked, as well as on that of the good. And has he less compassion on your *souls* than on your *bodies* ? By no means. He desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. “ Turn ye ; ” said the Lord to the rebellious house of Israel, “ turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die ? ” How long, already, has God delayed avenging himself upon us for sins ! Why ? — “ Not that he is slack concerning his promise, but that he is long-suffering to us-ward ; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance : ” “ For except we repent, we must all perish ; ” but a godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation.

You have heard that “ *God was manifested in the flesh*,” in the person of Jesus Christ. Astonishing as it is, it is certain, that he took upon him the form of a servant, suffered infirmity, want, contempt, persecution, and a shameful, miserable death. So wonderful an event must answer some good purpose. The prophecies of the Old Testament concur with the sayings of our Lord himself, and his apostles, in the New Testament, to teach us what was the design of the sufferings and death of Christ. “ He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows ; was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray ; we

have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." Isa. liii. 4, 6. "I am the good shepherd," said Jesus, "I lay down my life for the sheep. They shall never perish, but I give unto them eternal life." John x. "Whom God hath set forth," says the apostle Paul, "to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 25, 26. And can any one believe that Jesus humbled himself as a man, and suffered as if he had been a malefactor, for the sole purpose of *saving sinners*; and yet suspect that he will *refuse salvation* to those that seek it from him? It was for "the joy" of saving sinners that he "endured the cross, disregarding the shame." Well may it then be said, that "there is joy in heaven over every sinner that repenteth." May you now believe in Christ, that he may "see of the travail of his soul," in your salvation "and be satisfied."

Consider what is said in the text, "*He went about doing good.*" He not only never rejected one request for help, of all the numberless persons who applied to him, but he went about, in order to "seek and save that which was lost." He travelled for this purpose on foot, with much weariness and faintness, from one end of the land of Canaan to the other, again and again. He compares himself to a shepherd, who seeks far and wide for a poor wandering sheep, that never could have found its way back to the fold. So his willingness to do good to sinners is still proved, by his command to those who are intrusted with the Gospel, that they should preach it to all mankind; by his providence, in sending his disciples throughout the world, without which, the Gospel would to this day have been unknown in England; and by the influence of his Spirit upon the hearts of all them who are made willing in the day of his power, to lay hold on the Hope set before them; for what but the sovereign grace of God makes any of *you*, who long for his salvation, to differ from the rest, who reject it to their everlasting destruction? If *we* feel any love to God, it is "because he first loved us;" and he hath said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to

me ; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Brethren, the Scriptures inform us that, beside the two great purposes for which, as we have observed, Christ came into this world, there was a *third*. He came, not only to declare to us the will of God, and to offer himself up for the pardon of our sins, but also—"To leave us an **EXAMPLE** that we might walk in his steps." "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." We are unworthy to be called *Christians* if we do not *imitate* him. Let us set his bright and blessed example before us, as the text holds it forth. Let us do all the *good* we can to those around us, both to their bodies and their souls ; yea, even to "our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers ;" but especially to our relations and friends, and to those who serve God.—Let us remember Christ's labour, and patience in *going about* to do good to those, who either could not or would not come to him to receive it. *We* are humbly trying to follow our Lord Jesus Christ, in coming *here* to do you good. Our consciences bear us witness that we earnestly desire your welfare, and have no other end in view. We know nothing that can do you *greater* good, than to lead you to think more of God and eternity ; and to promote in you the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. We hope that God is visiting you by our means ; and that he will, by his Spirit, make this meeting useful to your souls.

If you remain strangers and enemies to God, it is not for want of the power or willingness of Christ to do you good. Do not forget what he has said to you on this subject. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present yourselves, living sacrifices to him, holy and acceptable, which is your reasonable service." If you do *not*, every mercy you have received, and the very means of instruction you have now had, must appear against you at the day of judgment.

But, if your hearts are now seriously affected with what you have heard ; if you feel yourselves to be guilty and helpless creatures ; if you earnestly desire the pardon of your sins, through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to have your minds renewed, and made like the mind

that was in him ; these things should encourage you to pray to Christ, to depend upon his grace, and to rejoice in the fulness of his salvation. We shall be extremely glad to find that this is the case with any among you ; for we know, that “ he who begins a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ.”—“ Now, to Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy : to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

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## SERMON XLIX.

### THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER.

Philip ii. 5 .....*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*

**W**HOEVER takes a view of Christianity, as displayed in the precepts and example of Christ, its great founder, must acknowledge it to be a very lovely religion ; admirably calculated to promote the happiness of man in the present world, as well as to secure his eternal salvation in the next.

“ It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”—to save them “ from their sins :”—not only to deliver them from the wrath to come, which is the wages of sin, but also to restore in them the holy image of God, which they had lost by their fall in Adam. He came, not only to restrain the practice of sin, but to purify the fountain of the heart, from whence the streams of sinful practice proceed.

To effect these great designs, he became a sacrifice for sin ; he was made sin for us : he died for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He procured for us, and sent down to us, the Holy Spirit, the great sanctifier of the Church. And having given to the world the purest precepts that were ever delivered, he gave infinite force to them, by a perfect example of purity, in his own temper and walk, and has left us this example for our imitation.



All true Christians are followers of Christ; they must walk even as he walked; and in order to this they must possess the same holy temper; or, as it is expressed in the text, "the same mind," must be in them, which was in Christ Jesus. This mind, or disposition, is the subject of the present discourse. May the good Spirit of God explain it to us, and produce it in us!

We might express the whole in a single word. LOVE is the mind of Christ; for "God is Love." The whole law is fulfilled in love: love to God, and love to man. This filled the heart of the great Redeemer, actuated him in the whole of his obedience and sufferings, supported him under them, and rendered them acceptable, meritorious and efficacious to the salvation of the Church. This is the mind that was in Christ; this his prevailing disposition; and the principal part of our holiness consists in being like him, and living under the daily influence of love to God and love to man. But it is necessary to be more particular, and to consider the christian temper in its several branches. We begin with,

1. HUMILITY. This deserves the first place, both because it is that grace in Christ, to which the text refers, and because it is, in every believer, the *root* of all other graces. Wonderful indeed was the humility of the Son of God, "who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!" Behold here, the greatest example of humility that the world ever saw, or ever will see! and this example is proposed to our imitation. And what argument can be so forcible? for, shall the glorious Saviour be humble, and the miserable sinner be proud? How preposterous! How absurd!

*Pride* is natural to apostate man. It was a principal ingredient in the sin of Adam, and every child of his is born proud. Adam got it from the devil, and we get it from Adam. And yet, it is truly said, "Pride was not made for man;" it ill becomes him. For a *sinner* to be proud, is the most monstrous thing in the world! Nothing is so

hateful to God ; and, if we are born of God, nothing will be so hateful to us. Now faith lays the axe at the root of pride. Faith beholds the majesty and holiness of God, and shrinks, as it were, into nothing before him. The proud man swells by comparing himself with other sinners ; but the Christian compares himself, his conduct, and then his heart, with the most pure, holy, spiritual law of God : this prevents self-righteous boasting, and shews that even his best duties are tinged with sin. He was “ alive without the law once ; but now the commandment is come, sin revives, and he dies. This experience will force him to the cross ; he will gladly renounce his own works and righteousness, and supremely desire to be “ found in Christ.”

Let but the Christian think of three things, and it will promote his humility—*what he was*—*what he is*—and *what he shall be*. He *was* a poor, blind, naked, filthy rebel ; an enemy to God, and an heir of hell. He *is*, by grace, a pardoned sinner, and an adopted child ; but, O, what imperfection in all his graces ! What defects in all his duties ! What strength in his corruptions ! What a disproportion between his obligations, and his returns to God ; between his professions, and his practice ; between his privileges, and his enjoyments ! So that he can cordially unite with a better man than himself in saying, “ I am the chief of sinners,” and “ less than the least of all saints.” Let him also consider *what he shall be*—he shall be “ with Christ ;” he shall be “ like Christ ;” he shall wear a crown of glory ; he shall possess a heavenly inheritance ; he shall be a king and a priest to God. Amazing prospects ! Animating, yet humbling hopes ! He will then, with David, sit down and say, “ Who am I, O Lord God, that thou hast brought me hitherto : and, as if this were a small thing in thy sight, thou hast spoken of thy servant’s house for a great while yet to come : and, Is this the manner of men, O Lord ? and what more can David say unto thee ?”

2. PIETY, or “ the fear of God, or “ godliness,” was an eminent branch of the mind that was in the man Christ Jesus. These terms are nearly of the same import, and denote the habitual, prevailing frame of the mind, in its regard to the blessed God. It is the character of the na-

tural man that he is “ungodly” ‘there is no fear of God before his eyes,’ he lives ‘without God in the world,’ he is ‘alienated from the life of God,’ ‘he says to the Almighty depart from me.’ The very reverse of all this is the temper of the Christian, and was also of his Master. We learn from the Gospels, and more abundantly from the Psalms, what a spirit of devotion continually animated the human nature of Christ. With reverential fear, what supreme affection, what fervent prayer! A portion of the same spirit pervades the heart of every real Christian. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” and “the whole of man”—his great duty, his first interest, his chief delight. And this divine principle is implanted in every believer. “I will put my fear in their heart,” is the grand covenant promise, and it is fulfilled to every elect soul, when called by grace. The newborn soul turns naturally to God, as flowers to the sun, or the needle to the pole; and though it may be disturbed or diverted for a time, the heavenly principle within abides and prevails, and the Christian is constrained to say “Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.”

The spirit of piety will render those acts of religion, which were intolerably burdensome to the unconverted man, natural and pleasant. Religion is no longer his medicine, but his food; not his task, but his delight. And the fear of God will certainly produce a reverence for his name; the Christian cannot be a profane man; he cannot habitually ‘take in vain,’ in the light manner of the world, the great and fearful name of the Lord his God. And this principle will insure his sacred regard to the holy Sabbath, the bible, the house of God, the preached Gospel, the table of the Lord, and every means divinely appointed for his growth in grace.

3. SPIRITUALITY is another essential part of the christian temper. This is a necessary effect of regeneration, for, as “that which is born of the flesh is flesh, so, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Every nature generates its own likeness. We derive from our first parent the likeness of his apostate nature, earthly and sensual, not having the Spirit; but, if begotten again by the Holy

Ghost, we derive from him a nature that is spiritual. Natural men "*mind* earthly things," they understand, pursue and relish only things of a worldly nature, while the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to them; but the believer, being born from above, minds heavenly things, and sets his affections supremely on things above, and not on things below. This constitutes the grand difference between the children of this world, and the children of God; and our future destination will be accordingly; for, "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." While we are in the world, a due regard must be paid to our worldly callings, for religion, so far from encouraging sloth and idleness, requires us to be "diligent in business;" but it requires us also to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." The things of this world, however great and important in some views, will be considered, in the light of eternity, as empty bubbles, insignificant trifles, and childish toys. The Christian weighs every thing in the balances of eternity. He considers what their value will be when he is on a dying bed; and judges how far they may be made conducive to his everlasting interest, for he "walks by faith, not by sight."

Besides, he is "crucified to the world, and the world to him," by the cross of Christ. Our gracious Lord never discovered any taste or relish for the pomps and vanities of this world. As Lord of all, he could have commanded every thing that was noble and great. But it is evident that he poured contempt on worldly grandeur. His whole life, death, and doctrine, tended to stain the pride of human glory: and to sanctify to his humble followers that lowly state he intended for them. Luxury of living, gaiety of dress, and conformity to the vain world, can plead no countenance from the example of Christ; but self-denial, plainness of living and manners, deadness to the world, and heavenly mindedness, are the very mind that was in Christ, and will be in us if we are his genuine followers.

4. CONTENTMENT is another feature of the christian character. And this will result, in a happy degree, from spirituality and heavenly mindedness. A proper view, by faith, of eternal things, and a good hope, by grace, of



an interest in them, will occasion a holy indifference about worldly matters, and render us content with our present lot. Of old time, those persons "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, who knew in themselves that they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance." Heb. xi. 34. The way to be happy in this world is not to elevate our station to our mind, but to bring down our mind to our station. The first, is perhaps, impossible; for the ambitious mind of the prosperous man continues to rise with his lot; so that he is never satisfied. The last may, by divine grace, be accomplished. The Christian believes that God reigns, that his providence is universal, that a sparrow does not fall without his observation, and that the very hairs of his head are numbered; and if so, he has reason to conclude, that a special and most gracious providence presides over all his affairs. The believer, therefore, having committed all his concerns to the Lord's care, in the diligent and prudent use of means, will rest satisfied with the disposal of heaven. He will say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." We are led to expect trouble in this world; man, being born in sin, is born to trouble; and instead of wondering that things are so bad, we have reason to wonder that they are no worse. He who knows the evil of sin, and the plague of his own heart, will say, at the worst of times, "He hath not dealt with me according to my sins, nor rewarded me according to my iniquities." Besides, there is generally some cause for praise,

"There is *Mercy* in every lot,  
And *Mercy*, (encouraging thought!)  
Gives even affliction a grace,  
And reconciles man to his lot."

Thrice happy was the apostle Paul, who could say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer need"—Should you think this a difficult lesson, and that, in certain cases, you could not practise it—mark what follows—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Phil. iv. 11, 12, 13. St. Paul, in

himself, was as weak as another man; but he had learned to live upon Christ, and by faith to receive out of his fulness, grace for grace. Every believer may do the same. And let him remember, this patient temper is "the mind that was in Christ." Through a whole life of poverty and sufferings here, we read not of a single murmur; and when, in his agony, the bitterest cup that ever was mingled, was put into his hands, he said, "The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink of it? Not my will, but thine be done."

5. MEEKNESS must also be mentioned as an amiable branch of the Christian temper. Jesus Christ was remarkably meek, and he pronounced a blessing on his meek followers. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." We read of "the gentleness of Christ." How calmly did he endure the contradiction of sinners against himself; how meekly submit to the vilest indignities! Happiest they, who most resemble him! It is a great victory for a man to subdue his own angry temper; and to preserve a sacred composure amidst all the ruffling storms and tempests of cross affairs, affronts, losses and injuries. This meekness is not the effect of constitution, a temper naturally mild, nor the result of art and deceit; but a truly Christian grace, wrought by the Holy Spirit, arising from self-knowledge, self-possession, a sense of the goodness and love of God; it is seated in the heart, and will discover itself in the countenance and in the language. The meek Christian may be angry; but meekness will restrain his anger within proper bounds, as to the degree, duration, and effects of it; he will not be easily provoked, he will readily forgive, and will acquire that happy useful art—the government of the tongue. A loud, clamorous, boisterous, boasting professor, little resembles the meek Jesus; but the meek Christian adorns the doctrine of God his Saviour, greatly recommends the Gospel of Christ, and enjoys a tranquillity of soul, which is heaven begun on earth—a blessed foretaste of the undisturbed serenity of glorified saints.

6. MERCY was a distinguishing grace in the character of Christ, and must be the prevailing disposition of his followers. Compassion to perishing sinners brought him down from heaven. Compassion dictated all his

words, and directed all his actions ; and, blessed be God, we have still “ a merciful and a faithful High Priest, who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the way.” When the sick and afflicted were brought to Jesus, he had compassion on them and healed them. When the multitude who followed him from far to hear him preach, were hungry and faint, he had compassion on them and fed them. He went about doing good. O let us be like him !

Hard as a rock, is the heart of man, by nature. Anger, envy, malice, revenge and selfishness reign, and make men resemble the devil. The greater part of men called Christians “ *live to themselves,*” and are satisfied if they do *no harm*, though they do *no good* ;—are secure, selfish, angry and peevish ; confine their kindness to their relations ; do little good but what they are pressed to ; esteem all lost that is done for the relief of others ; and think it wise to be cautious, and disbelieve the necessities of men : in a word, they make SELF the end of their lives : whatever their profession be, they very little represent or glorify God in the world. But on the contrary, a man whose nature is cured and rectified by grace, freed from pride, envy and selfishness, and thence rendered benevolent, and useful to his fellow-men, is the best representation we have of God upon earth, since the human nature of Christ was removed from it.

“ Blessed are the merciful,” said the benevolent Redeemer, “ for they shall obtain mercy.” We are not to purchase God’s mercy by our mercy ; but it is a good evidence of being ourselves “ vessels of mercy,” when we are inwardly disposed to be merciful. We are exhorted to “ put on, *as the elect of God*, bowels of mercies.” If we have felt the need of mercy, and tasted the sweetness of mercy, we shall find a divine pleasure in being merciful to the sons and daughters of affliction ; we shall be forward to give and forgive, to pity and relieve them.

The *souls* of men claim our first regard. Millions of men are perishing for lack of knowledge. The merciful man will not only pray for them, but will gladly endeavour to send the glorious Gospel of Jesus to them : he will

cast a pitying eye upon the poor ignorant children around him, and promote their religious instruction: he will gladly support the Christian ministry, knowing its important use in the conversion of sinners. Nor will the *bodies* of men be neglected. He will pity and visit the sick; he will feed the hungry; he will clothe the naked: and, in order to do this, he will rather deny himself even lawful indulgencies, than be disabled from acts of generosity. The word of God abounds with exhortations to this disposition; and if there be not a desire and endeavour thus to be useful, we may say, with St. John, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?"

The narrow limits of this discourse prevent the mention of several other branches of this holy temper, as well as a proper enlargement on those already mentioned.—We have room only to propose one more, which is the beauty and strength of them all, namely,

6. SINCERITY.—This is the very soul of all religion; for every Christian grace has its counterfeit. There are men who assume a profession of religion, on purpose the better to deceive others; and pretend to be devout towards God, that they may more effectually cheat and defraud their neighbours.—From this vile hypocrisy, good Lord deliver us!—If there be a place in hell hotter than another, it will be the portion of the hypocrite; for how shall such "escape the damnation of hell?" Great is the importance of truth and uprightness. The Christian must needs be an honest man, exact and conscientious in all his affairs, conforming himself, in all his dealings, to that golden, that divine rule, *Whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even that to them.* The Christian will study "simplicity and godly sincerity," speaking the truth in love, and managing all the affairs of life as under the eye of God, and with a regard to his glory. Happy the man of whom the Lord will testify, as of Nathaniel, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!"

APPLICATION.—We may learn, from what has been said of the Christian temper, how excellent is the religion, and how holy the Gospel, of Jesus Christ; how admirably calculated to promote godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity. What a happy world would this be, if men, who



profess and call themselves Christians, possessed the mind that was in Christ. We may learn also the necessity of something more than *morality*. Men may be honest and harmless ; but this is not enough. We see many who are deemed moral characters, who are ungodly, unbelievers, neglecters of Christ, despisers of the Gospel. Let them not suppose that their regard to men will atone for their contempt of God. Let them know, that “ without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.”

How vain also is that profession of the truths of the Gospel, which leaves a man destitute of the Christian temper, a slave to his wretched passions, and under the dominion of covetousness, pride, anger, selfishness, and worldly-mindedness. For, some there are, not only negligent of holy tempers, but who despise that preaching which enforces them, calling it legal and low. But it is evident that our Lord insisted much upon inward purity, and pronounced his first blessings upon heavenly dispositions. The apostles abound in similar exhortations, throughout their epistles ; nor is he a Christian who does not hunger and thirst after the attainment of them ; all believers being “ predestinated to be conformed to the image of God’s dear Son.”

On the survey of this brief sketch of the “ mind that was in Christ,” who has not cause to blush, and sigh, and say, Holy Jesus, how far am I from possessing thy likeness ! One of the ancients, on a like occasion, cried, “ Blessed Lord, either these are not thy precepts, or we are not Christians !” But, let me ask, Is this the temper you sincerely and earnestly desire ? Do you mourn over your daily defects ? Do you see an excellency and a beauty in holiness, and do you ardently long to resemble your Saviour ? If so, be not dejected. This desire is from the Lord, and is a token for good. Let no believer sit down in sullen despair, and say, when he contemplates the character of Jesus—It is too high and great. I can never master my corruptions, and attain his dispositions ! Why not ? All things are possible to God : all things are possible to him that believeth. Does not all fulness dwell in Christ ? and is it not treasured up for thy use ? Go to him for it—make free—it is thine for fetching. Ask and

ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.—Come boldly to the throne of grace, to find grace ; there is grace sufficient for thee. Open thy mouth wide, and it shall be filled, and though conscious, like the apostle Paul that you have not already attained, neither are you already perfect ; yet, like him, follow after, reach forth unto those things which are before ; press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Look much at Christ ; it will make you like him ; you shall be “ transformed into the same image, from glory to glory ;” and, ere long, you “ shall see him as he is,” and “ be satisfied when you awake, with his likeness.”

## SERMON L.

### CHRISTIAN PRACTICE.

*Titus ii. 11, 12... For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men ; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.*

THE disease of our nature, our dislike of that which is good, and our love of that which is evil, has been observed and lamented by wise men in all ages. The fact could not be denied. The difficulty was, where to find a cure. Many attempts were tried, but all in vain, till Jesus Christ the great physician appeared. The Gospel alone affords a certain and universal remedy for the fatal distemper of the soul ; and this is the substance of our text.

St. Paul is here directing Titus, who was a minister of the Gospel, how to discharge his duty, so as to be useful to all sorts of people, because the Gospel was sent to all sorts of people. He was to teach and exhort both young and old, parents and children, masters and servants : it being the design of the Gospel to bring a present salvation from sin, as well as a future deliverance from hell, and to teach all sorts of men to deny all doctrines and practices which are ungodly : and all worldly lusts of sensuality ; and that we should live soberly with respect to ourselves ; righteously and honestly with respect to our neighbour ;

and, in a holy manner with respect to God. This will appear more plainly by considering the several parts of the text distinctly, and in the following order.

1. The Gospel of Christ is the grace or gift of God.

2. It bringeth salvation.

3. It hath appeared to all men.

4. It teacheth us to live a holy life.

1. The Gospel is the grace of God. The word *Grace* signifies, in general, the free favour of God, either in his *good will* towards us, or in his *good gifts* to us. Here it means one of his good gifts to us, namely, the Gospel: and the Gospel may well be called his grace, for, it is the Gift of his grace; it is the Revelation of his grace; and, it is the Instrument of his grace.

The Gospel is called the grace of God, because it is the *Gift* of his grace; it is a matter of pure favour that we have the Gospel; it ought to be thought a very great blessing indeed, and to be esteemed above all earthly blessings. It is a mercy to have health, it is a mercy to have bread, but it is a much greater mercy to have the Gospel. Blessed is the people who know the joyful sound.

The Gospel is also called the grace of God, because it is the *Revelation* of his grace and good-will to poor sinners. We could never have known whether God would be gracious to sinners or not, without the Gospel. We could never have known that salvation is by grace. All mankind naturally seek it by their own works, and not by grace. But the very design of the Gospel is to declare the grace of God; to let us know the love of God to man, which he has proved in the gift of his Son, and in his readiness to pardon sin for the sake of his Son. Sinners had more reason to expect a revelation of his wrath, than of his mercy, for all have sinned, and "the wages of sin is death." As soon as our first parents had sinned, and heard the voice of the Lord God in the garden, they were afraid, and ran to hide themselves, for they expected to hear nothing but the sentence of death. But they were mistaken, for God was pleased to give them a promise of his Son. In all ages he gave some hints of his intended mercy, but never so plainly, as by the Gospel, or good news of salvation by grace. We must take care to distinguish the

Gospel from the law. The law of the ten commandments requires perfect love and perfect obedience, and it curses to hell every man who breaks it but once. Ignorant people expect little from the bible but to teach them their duty, and how to be good, and so to get to heaven by their obedience; to be sure the bible does teach us our duty, and it would be well if people learned and did it better; but the first design of the bible is to reveal Christ as a Saviour; the design of the law is not only to teach us our duty, but to convince us we have not done it; to shew us our sin and our danger, and to oblige us to fly to Christ, that we may be saved by grace.

Again—the Gospel is called the grace of God, because it is the *Instrument* of his grace; it is what he sends by his ministers, and blesses by his Spirit, “to open men’s eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Nothing but the truth of God will do this. All the finest preaching in the world about virtue and morality, will do no good as to the conversion or salvation of a sinner. It often makes men proud of themselves, keeps them ignorant of Christ, and makes them “go about to establish their own righteousness;” which is “to frustrate the grace of God,” and is as much as to say that “Christ died in vain.” But the Gospel is the sword of the Spirit, the rod of his strength, and the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth. You see, therefore, with what good reason the Gospel is called the grace of God. We are now to show that.

## II. The Gospel bringeth salvation.

The grand subject of this Gospel is Salvation. It supposes the guilt and danger of man as a sinner. It declares what Christ has done and suffered for our deliverance. It declares God’s readiness to forgive all manner of sin and blasphemy, if we come to him by Jesus Christ. In short, it is to restore man from all the effects of his fall. Is he far gone from God? it is to bring him back. Is he fallen? it is to raise him up. Is he condemned on account of sin? it is to justify him from all things. Is he an enemy of God? it is to make him a friend. Is he a slave of Satan? it is to make him a free man. Thus it bringeth salvation.



It brings it to the *Ear*. The trumpet of the Gospel sounds with an inviting voice, it is a joyful sound. No music was ever so sweet, as the sound of mercy to a convinced sinner. And faith cometh by hearing. It is the will of God that this sound should go out into all the earth, and that the Gospel should be preached to every creature. 'He that hath ears to hear let him hear.'

It brings it to the *Mind* or understanding. All God's children are taught of God, and every one that is taught of God cometh to Christ. Many people plead their ignorance, and think they shall be excused on account of it; but the Gospel is sent on purpose to enlighten the ignorant; and it will be our own fault, and our ruin, if we remain in the dark; it can only be because we love darkness rather than light. The Gospel is a glorious light, and when it is attended with the power of the Spirit, it chases away all the natural darkness of our minds, and makes us clearly see the wonderful plan of salvation by grace.

It brings it to the *Heart*. It comes with power and life. It is not entertained with a cold and formal assent, as a matter of small concern, but cordially welcomed as the messenger of life. It is said of Lydia, in the Acts of the Apostles, "that the Lord opened her heart, so that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul." He does the same for all real Christians. They receive the word with joy. They approve of it heartily. It brings peace to their troubled consciences, and it brings love to God and man into their hearts.

It brings it to the *Life*. It is designed to regulate the conduct, and to make the believer holy in all manner of conversation and godliness. But this will appear more plainly hereafter.

III. The Gospel of salvation hath appeared to *all men*.

To *all nations* of men; it was not confined to the Jews, as they thought it would be. Jesus Christ ordered it to be preached to all nations, to all the world, to every creature. Accordingly on the day of Pentecost the apostles preached it in a great variety of languages to people of various countries, and afterwards they, and many other preachers, went into all the countries then known.

*To all sorts of men.* This is the chief design of the words. In human society there must be various ranks and orders of men, and they must be distinguished by different names; but the Gospel knows no distinctions; it is equally sent to high and low, rich and poor, bond and free; male and female, for "Christ is all in all." Col. iii. 11. Let none, therefore, think they may be excused from regarding it. Many of the rich think the Gospel is well enough for the poor, but they are too wise to need it. Many of the poor, on their part, think religion rather belongs to the rich; but they are so ignorant, and have so much to mind for the body, that they think they may be excused. But you see, this salvation is sent to all men; and "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" But again, this Gospel is sent

*To sinners of every degree; great sinners, or little sinners,* if it be proper to call any so. Jesus Christ came to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance; and none but those who feel themselves to be sinners will regard his call. Such persons heard him gladly on earth, while the proud pharisees, who thought themselves good, despised him, and abused him, as the friend of publicans and sinners. Blessed be God that sinners, however great, are not excluded from the hope of the Gospel. Christ commanded it to be first preached at Jerusalem, among his murderers: where, probably, many of them were converted; and to this very day, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin."

Let it also be observed that our text says, the Gospel *bringeth* salvation; not, it *shall* bring it hereafter, but it *bringeth* it *now*. It brings it near at this moment; "the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thine heart." Many people dreadfully mistake the matter, who look only for a salvation hereafter; they do not think of being saved till they die; but salvation is a present business; and if we are not saved before we die, we shall never be saved at all. We must now be enlightened, convinced, believe in Christ, pass from death unto life, and thus be made new creatures, or, we can never enter into the kingdom of heaven. O that this Gospel may *now* bring into our hearts a present salvation! We proceed to the last and principal thing in our text.

IV. The Gospel which bringeth salvation, teacheth us to live a holy life—it *teacheth us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*; that is, it teacheth us—What a holy life is,—The necessity of living such a life—and, How we may attain it.

1. The Gospel, which bringeth salvation, teacheth us what a holy life is—the true nature, and full extent of it. We have no other sufficient rule. The world affords nothing but imperfect examples, and our own deceitful hearts would often curtail the perfect rule. This is our teacher. Let us ever hear and read it with this view. Let it be a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths:

This holy guide directs us, in the first place, to *deny ungodliness*,—to renounce, abhor, and forsake all infidelity, idolatry, and impiety of every kind; every thing contrary to the four first commandments. If the devil, or wicked men, or our own wicked hearts, would tempt us to neglect the worship of God, or to take his name in vain, or to break the Sabbath, we must deny and refuse to do it. We must also *deny worldly lusts*, all irregular inclinations and desires, forbidden by the last six commandments. These are *worldly lusts*; such as the men of the world gratify, and place their happiness in. These will often ask for indulgence. They will plead very strongly that they are natural, that there is no harm in them, and that all the world indulges them, but they are “worldly lusts,” and must be denied, unless we are willing to be damned with the world; for the “end of these things is death.” These are the things that chain men to the world and to a life of sense, make us like the brutes, cause us to forget God, to neglect the salvation of our souls; and “for these things’ sake, cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” This ungodliness, and these worldly lusts must, therefore, be denied; and this is that *Self-denial* which our Lord insists upon, and without which we cannot be his disciples.

But this is not all. We are taught by the Gospel how to live. We are to live—*soberly, righteously, and godly*; these three words tell us our duty as to *ourselves*, our *neighbour*, and our *God*.

To live *soberly* is not only to abstain from drunkenness, which is a damnable sin, but from all excess in eating, drinking, and other bodily indulgencies. It is to be sober and moderate in our passions, our recreations, our speech, our dress, and whole behaviour; it is to be temperate and moderate in all lawful things, using the world as not abusing it; using it as pilgrims and strangers; not making it our rest or portion: but making all worldly comforts secondary things, subservient to the interests of our souls and the glory of our God. This is to live soberly.

We are also to live *righteously*, that is, in respect of our neighbour; to give every one his due; to honour all men; and do the duty of our stations, whether to our superiors, inferiors, or equals. The New Testament is full of excellent directions as to relative duties. The apostles largely teach us the duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters, servants and subjects. A true Christian will study his bible with this view; and, in every relation of life, he will endeavour to conform himself to it; and he that pretends to religion without this, is a mere hypocrite. This is too little regarded by many professors of religion, as beneath their notice; they would even deter ministers from enforcing the relative duties, by calling it "legal stuff, working for life, and arminianism;" but these people know not what they say, and how much they disgrace the Gospel of Christ, which our text declares, is intended to teach us these things. It was a weighty saying of Mr. Whitefield, that "To be *really* holy, is to be *relatively* holy." All sincere believers think so, and act accordingly.

But the Gospel also requires us to live *godly*. Many ignorant people think that if they live *soberly* and *righteously* it is enough. How many do we hear excusing themselves from all regard to Gospel-religion, by pleading that they are sober and honest. And will these people call themselves *Christians*? Moral heathens they may be. We deny they are Christians; for the Christian has a constant regard to God in Christ; he knows him, he believes in him, he fears him, he loves him, he prays to him, he converses with him, he lives to him. O the miserable blindness of many in this land of light! How many on a



dying bed, build all their hopes on their honesty, and having done no harm; while they have lived all their days in neglect of the salvation of Christ, neglect of his Sabbath and worship, buried alive in the cares of the world; sensual, worldly, covetous; perhaps opposers of the Gospel, and persecutors of the faithful. The Lord in his infinite mercy open the eyes of such mistaken persons, and preserve them from going out of the world with a lie in their right hand!

To live *godly* includes a great deal. We must know God, by the teaching of his Spirit. We must believe on him as a God reconciled in Christ. We must love him as our heavenly Father. We shall then love his law, and gladly be governed by his commandments. His word will be precious to us. His Sabbath delightful. His worship pleasant. His ordinances sweet. In a word, we shall "walk humbly with our God;" it will be our meat and drink to do his will; and being no longer our own, but bought with a price, we shall glorify God in our bodies, and in our Spirits, which are his.

This is that kind of life which the Gospel teaches us. This is its nature and extent. The Gospel also shews us the absolute *necessity* of it. Many deceive themselves with vain words, and think there is no occasion to be so strict; and they labour to render a life of holiness contemptible, by calling it ill names, such as fanaticism and enthusiasm, and by ridiculing serious persons as methodists, hypocrites, and righteous over much. But we abide by the bible. We abide by our text. The God of truth has prescribed this as the way of life; and has awfully declared that without repentance, without faith, without holiness and godliness, no man shall see the Lord. By this we are determined to abide, and let others look to themselves.

But should any say, All this is very right and good, but who can come up to it? By what means can we attain it? I answer, the Gospel that bringeth salvation teacheth us how to attain it, and this is the peculiar excellency of the Gospel. The teachers of mere morality are like the taskmasters of Pharaoh, who required the Israelites to make brick without straw. They are always preaching that men should do this and that, but they tell them not their own

inability, nor where there great strength lies. When we view a natural man wedded to the world, or tied and bound with the chains of his sin, or wallowing in the mire of sensual lusts, we are ready to say, Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the Leopard his spots? But nothing is too hard for the Lord. The Gospel first directs the sinner to repair by faith to Christ, and to obtain the pardon of his sins through his precious blood. This is his first business; And if the sinner be enabled to believe in Jesus, his faith will work by love, will purify his heart, and overcome his lusts. We are not, by our own power, first to reform our lives, and then, as gracious and good people, to trust in Christ for salvation; but as soon as ever we discover our need of a Saviour, to fly to him without delay, just as we are. And he casts out none that come to him. Believing in him will give a new turn to our affections. We shall mourn for pardoned sin. We shall hate the murderers of our Lord. We shall be crucified to the world by the cross of Jesus; and the ways of godliness will no longer be a burden and a task but our pleasant and easy service. The love of Christ will constrain us, and we shall judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all that henceforth they who live, should not live to themselves, but unto him who died for them.

Besides, Whoever believes in Jesus is really united to him, in the same manner as the vine and its branches are united. All our fruitfulness in good works depends on this union. "Abide in me," said our Lord; "thus shall ye bring forth much fruit, for without me, ye can do nothing." This is the true secret of godliness, the Gospel mystery of sanctification, and the only way of becoming holy. In this way nothing is too hard to be accomplished; and on this ground every believer may say with St. Paul, "I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me." We shall now conclude with some *Inferences* and *Exhortations*.

1. Is the Gospel the Grace of God? The Gift of his grace? The Revelation of his grace? And the Instrument of his grace? Then take care to distinguish the Gospel from all false doctrine. Beware of "another Gospel." Whatever does not bring to helpless sinners the good new

of a free grace salvation is not the Gospel. Reject it. And O take care that "you receive not the grace of God in vain." 2 Cor. vi. 1. The grace of God, as a divine principle in the heart, cannot be received in vain, but the Gospel, which is also called the grace of God, is often received in vain. It is a great privilege to have the Gospel preached to us, but a dreadful thing to have it prove "the savour of death to death;" for, Christ has said it, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16.

Is the Gospel the grace of God? Prize it yourselves, and recommend it to others. Next to Christ himself, it is the greatest gift of God to a ruined world. What an inexpressible privilege and honour is it, to be in any way instrumental in communicating this heavenly gift to others! Let us invite our neighbours to hear it. Let us put some Gospel tracts into their hands. Let us speak of it to our relations and friends. Let us support and countenance the preaching of it at home and abroad; and, especially, Let us recommend it to others by the holy effects it has produced on ourselves. Let us recommend it by our lives.

It appears from what has been said that there is no ground for the reproach often cast on the Gospel of grace, that it leads to licentiousness, or that the doctrine of faith and grace is hurtful to morality and good works. It is a foul and groundless slander. Nothing is more false. Our text confutes it at once. We have shown that the Gospel is properly called the grace of God; it is the Gospel that bringeth salvation by grace; and this free-grace Gospel teacheth us to live a holy life. What can be plainer? And let it be noted, that nothing but the Gospel of grace can truly teach or produce a holy life. This was, at first, the power of God to the salvation of bigotted Jews, and beastly Heathens. In every succeeding age it has had the same blessed effects. And it is the same to this day. While moral preachers labour in vain, and many of them address their heathen lectures to sleepy hearers and empty pews, we know and are sure, that the plain truths of the Gospel are effectual to quicken dead sinners, to convert notorious rebels, and to produce in numberless persons "the fruits of good living." This is its proper tendency;

these, its genuine fruits. And we adore the grace that renders the word powerful for these blessed purposes.

If any false professors of religion abuse the doctrines of grace for licentious practices, they have no countenance in so doing from the Gospel, or the preachers of it. Our text will at once confront and confound such base hypocrites. It teaches them the nature, necessity, and method of attaining a holy life. Believers were "chosen in Christ, that they might be holy, and without blame before him in love." All the commands of God both in the Old and New Testament, require it. It was an eminent branch of the design of Christ in dying for his people. It is necessary to the present peace and happiness of our souls, in this world of sin and vanity. This is the way in which God expects us to glorify him among men. And in this consists our "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light."

May our holy God, who has favoured us with his holy Gospel, render it effectual by his Holy Spirit, to make us "holy in all conversation and godliness;" and, at the great day, "present us holy, and unblameable, and unproveable in his sight." To Him, be glory, now and forever. Amen.

## SERMON LI.

### NON-CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

Romans xii. 2.....*And be not conformed to this world.\**

**T**HIS is a general exhortation, adapted to a great variety of occasions. It affords an excellent rule for the Christian's conduct, which he may readily apply, when tempted to follow the course of this world. It is easy to

\* As this sermon is designed to expose the sin and danger of *Carnal Games and Amusements*, especially in the professors of religion, it may be usefully read in *Holiday-seasons*; at the time of a *Fair*, or *Wakes*; or when *Theatrical Amusements* are introduced into a town. It may also be lent to a friend who is in danger of being tempted to sinful compliances upon such occasions.



know what the world loves and pursues, and it is easy to remember that the Christian must take a different course. The way of the world is the broad way to destruction; the way of life is narrow, and trodden but by few.

The text is a plain and direct prohibition against conformity to the world. It is addressed to the people of God, and stands connected with an affectionate exhortation to be devoted to him. This chapter is wholly practical; and follows a large and excellent discourse upon the exceeding riches of divine grace to sinners, in their free and full justification through faith in Christ Jesus, and the most noble and glorious privileges to which they are called. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Thus are the doctrines of grace sweetly connected with a gracious walk and conversation. They are connected in the Bible, and they are connected in all those who are taught of God. May we happily know their sacred union by our own experience!

In order to this complete devotedness to God, the apostle here advises believers "not to be *conformed* to this world"—not to be moulded into the same fashion—not to comply with their temper and spirit—not to imitate their depraved customs and manners; but, on the contrary, to "be transformed, by the renewing of their minds;" to be changed into a contrary, better, more glorious, and abiding form—in the daily renovation of their souls, yet more and more, by the Holy Spirit. The text, therefore, teaches us this great and useful doctrine, that

CHRISTIANS must not be conformed to this world.

By "the world," we are certainly to understand, the men of the world, in opposition to true believers, or the people of God. That there is a real and essential distinction between the world and the Church, is abundantly plain from the Scriptures. Jesus Christ saith of his disciples, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;" and St. John saith of believers, "We know we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." This important distinction prevails throughout the Bible.—Every where, God's people are represented as differing

from the world. Believers are called children of God ; others, the children of the devil and the children of wrath : the one are friends, the other enemies : the one far from God, the other are brought nigh to God.

It was the design of Christ, in dying for his people, "to deliver them from this present evil world"—to save them "from the evil that is in the world"—to make an evident separation, and "to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" that is, to separate them from the wicked world for his own use, and for his own glory, as his precious and peculiar property, that they might be zealously affected towards him and his cause, in the performance of every good work.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ calls believers to this separation, and is the instrument of effecting it. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." 2 Cor. vi. 17. There is much danger in the company of idolaters, and in connexion with unbelievers ; there is danger of being infected and defiled ; therefore a proper distance must be kept. And the Gospel of Christ becomes an occasion of this separation ; it creates division, it causes disunion ; the believer is crucified to the world, and the world unto him. Thus faith, which is the bond of union with Christ, is the instrument of separation from the world. And how reasonable is it to expect, that persons, whose state and character now differ essentially from others, and who will be eternally separated as far as heaven is from hell, should now bear the visible marks of distinction, and not be conformed to this world !

We may now proceed to enquire in what this non-conformity consists, or in what degree it is required ; for a *total* separation is impossible, in the present state of things. There are family connexions, which are not to be dissolved, because some of the parties are gracious, and others remain in their sins, 1 Cor. vii. 10. There are also civil connexions, in the lawful affairs of this world, with which religion cannot interfere. If we would wholly avoid intercourse with the wicked, "we must needs go out of the world," for the world is full of them, 1 Cor. v. 10. Neither does religion require or countenance a morose and

sullen, or uncivil behaviour to the men of the world ; much less does it demand an entire exclusion from the affairs of life, and a solitary confinement in a monastery or nunnery. Christians are not, like the old Pharisees, to say to others —“ Stand off—we are holier than you.” On the contrary, believers are “ the salt of the earth,” and, by their necessary and lawful connexions with the world, are the happy means of preserving it from utter corruption ; they are “ the lights of the world,” and diffuse some general rays of knowledge amidst the general darkness. And by their wise, holy, and prudent conduct among men, are to condemn the world, as to what is evil in it, and recommend the Gospel they profess to the notice and approbation of others. But while, they are thus engaged, they are not to be conformed to the world, in the following respects.

1. *As to the Errors of the world*—their false and dangerous sentiments in religion. The doctrines of the Gospel are directly contrary to the generally received opinions of worldly men : they directly tend to humble the sinner, to exalt the Saviour, and to promote holiness ; while the notions of the world tend to make the sinner proud, with some fancied opinion of his goodness, works, and righteousness ; to diminish the glory of Jesus Christ as “ the Lord our Righteousness ;” and to make holiness in heart and life a needless, if not a contemptible thing. It is the high privilege of God’s people to be “ taught of God ;” to “ have the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive ;” to “ know the truth,” to “ be of the truth,” to “ keep the truth,” and to be “ sanctified by the truth.” False teachers “ are of the world, therefore they speak of the world, and the world heareth them ;” but he that is of God, and knoweth God, heartily embraces the truth of the Gospel, he “ heareth the voice of Christ, the true Shepherd, but the voice of a stranger he will not follow,” 1 John iv. 5, 6. John x. 16, 26, 27. This separation from the religious errors of the world is of the greatest importance ; and while we pay all civil respects to all men, and abhor persecution, we must give no countenance to error. St. John gives us this direction—“ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine (the doctrine of Christ,) receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed : for

he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." 2 John 10, 11.

2. *We must not be conformed to the world in its Sinful Practices.* "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," are called "the world's trinity," their god whom they worship and obey. The works of the flesh, and the fruits of the Spirit, are directly contrary to each other; they who are in the flesh practise the one, they that are in the Spirit practise the other. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; the doers of which shall not inherit the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 19—21. But "if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts." The Christian must therefore dissent from the world in its evil practices; even "the appearance of evil" must be carefully shunned. Pure religion and undefiled is to keep himself unspotted from the world—to behave in such a circumspect and holy manner, as to keep clear of the pollutions of this evil and ensnaring world, that he may not bring a slur upon his conscience or his character.

3. *Christians must not be conformed to the Spirit of the world.* There is a certain disposition and taste which forms the true character of a man of the world, and which operates as a powerful principle in the regulation of his whole conduct. There is also an opposite principle given to the people of God in their new birth, which gives a new taste to their minds, and a new bias to their affections. St. Paul, speaking of both these, saith, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God." 1 Cor. ii. 12. The spirit of the world must of course be a worldly spirit; or, in the language of Scripture, a "carnal mind!" it can be no other; for "that which is born of the flesh, is flesh." So God himself declared of man, before the flood—"My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is *flesh*—wholly fleshy and carnal"—"sensual, not having the Spirit." The desires, the pursuits, the delights of natural men are only worldly. Their cry is, "Who will show us any good?"



—“What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed?” The world, in some form or other, is their beloved object. But the people of God, “redeemed from their vain conversation,” have a nobler object in view.—They are *spiritual* in their taste and pursuits: they can no longer grovel in the dust, or feed on husks: they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and seek the things that are above. How poor, and mean, and low, are the sordid objects of the world in their esteem! Even the wisest and greatest among natural men are amusing themselves with the toys of children, the baubles of idiots, or the pranks of madmen, compared with the manly, solid, heavenly aims and employments of true believers.

4. *The Christian must not be conformed to the Company of the world.* The men of the world are not his chosen companions. We have already observed that converse with them cannot be wholly avoided. The lawful businesses of life will necessarily bring them together. But we speak of making them intimate friends, and the companions of leisure hours. But “how can two walk together, except they be agreed?” What fellowship hath light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial, or Christians with the sons of Belial? Either must the Christian conform himself to the light, vain, frothy, and often profane conversation of worldly men, or they must conform themselves to his spiritual views; and which of these is most likely to happen it is not hard to tell. We become insensible like our intimate friends, and naturally drink in to their spirit: as therefore there is, in general, but little probability of doing good to carnal men by our company, it is far wisest and safest for us to keep our distance. Intimate and habitual friendship with wicked men is considered, in the Scripture, as opposition to God. St. James, addressing himself to conforming professors, saith, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.”—If our chief happiness be in the things of the world, and if we court the friendship of wicked men in order to procure them, we are, at heart, enemies to God; and in persons of a religious character, who profess to be betroth-

ed unto Christ as their spiritual husband, this is heart-adultery.

And if this occasional conformity to worldly persons be so blameable, what must we think of forming connexions with them for life? How criminal, and how dangerous, to act directly contrary to the grand rule in this case—to marry—"only in the Lord." 1 Cor. vii. 39.

5. *Christians must not conform themselves to the world in their Carnal Amusements.* The taste of men discovers itself in nothing more plainly than in their choice of amusements. It is easy to know what these are, and what is adapted to the corrupt taste of the carnal mind. Worldly men are never so much in their element as when engaged in them; and, to enjoy them, they will often sacrifice their most important interests. Among these the amusements of the theatre have the first place; for these the world strongly pleads, and affects to place them on a level with divine ordinances, by saying, They can learn as much from a good play as from a sermon. But it should be remembered that sermons, and means of grace derive all their virtue from the authority of Christ who appointed them, and has promised to bless them; but the advocates of plays can never pretend that Christ has either ordained them, or engaged to put his blessing upon them.

So far are plays from being useful to the cause of virtue, that they are one of the most successful engines of vice that Satan ever invented. Several of the heathen philosophers and law-givers opposed them in the strongest terms. Plato banishes them from his commonwealth. Xenophon commends the Persians for not suffering their youth to hear any thing amorous, thinking it dangerous to add any weight to the bias of nature. Seneca complains, that by the stage, vice made an insensible approach, and stole on the people in the disguise of pleasure. Tacitus, says, the German ladies preserved their honour, by having no play-houses among them. The Athenians would not suffer a Judge to compose a comedy. The Lacedemonians would not endure the stage, under any kind of regulation. The Romans, in their better times, reckoned the stage so disgraceful, that any Roman turning actor was degraded. And we may add, that the English laws, till very lately, denominated stage-players—rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars.

The earliest Christians abhorred them. Tertullian, in the second century, says, "We (Christians) have nothing to do with the phrensies of the race-ground, the lewdness of the play-house, or the barbarities of the bear-garden." Some of the ancient councils ordained that players should be excommunicated, and that even the sons of clergymen must not be present at plays, "it being always unlawful for Christians to come among blasphemers." A good writer says—"Will you not avoid this seat of infection? The very air suffers by their impurities, and they breathe the plague. What though the performance be entertaining; what though innocence and virtue shine in some parts of it; it is not the custom to prepare poison unpalatably. No; to make the mischief spread, they must oblige the sense, and make the dose pleasant. Thus the devil throws in a cordial drop to make the draught go down, and steals some ingredients from the dispensatory of heaven. Look upon all their fine sentences, their flights of fortitude, and their loftiness of style—as honey dropping from the bowels of a toad or the bag of a spider." "And, admitting," says another, "that some good may be learnt at the play-house—do people use to send their daughters to a bawdy-house to learn discipline? Do gentlemen educate their sons under highway-men to teach them courage? Or will any man venture on board a leaky vessel, that he may learn the art of shifting in a storm?" Besides if plays have such a moral tendency, how is it that the players are generally the most immoral people in the world, and the neighbourhood of play-houses the very sink of filthiness?

Archbishop Tillotson thought plays "a mighty reproach to Britain, and not fit to be tolerated in a civilized, much less in a Christian nation." He calls the play-house "the devil's chapel, the school and nursery of vice and lewdness." And one of the Judges well said—"One play-house ruins more souls than fifty churches can save."

*Dancing.*—The dancing of both sexes, and especially in public places, is another species of amusement highly pleasing to the world, but extremely dangerous to good morals. The gaiety it inspires, the company into which it leads, and various evils connected with it, render it every way unbecoming the Christian; who has the utmost need

to cultivate seriousness and gravity, and to live and act as a pilgrim and a stranger. There is scarcely any thing not absolutely and notoriously wicked, in which conformity to the world consists more than the amusement of the ball-room. Not a few have been called out of it into eternity; but where is the person who would wish, when summoned to the bar of God, to be found so employed?

*Playing at Cards* is another favourite diversion with the world. The express purpose of this amusement is a sufficient argument against it—it is *to kill time*. Alas! our time is short enough, and will die of itself; we need not hasten its exit. Our days are as an handbreath, and our age is as nothing. We complain of the shortness of life, and yet labour to reduce its narrow span. It may justly be doubted whether any game be lawful which depends upon casting a lot; for dealing the cards is of that nature, and is therefore a kind of appeal to God for the success of our play, for “the lot is cast into the lap, but the disposal thereof is of the Lord.” But, not to insist upon this, it is really a childish business. It is a poor employment for rational and immortal beings to spend many hours of precious time in throwing about bits of spotted paper. The conversation that accompanies it is generally frivolous and foolish. The passions of avarice and anger are frequently excited, and the tragical consequences of gaming, are so perfectly opposite to the Christian character, that a good man ought to reject the amusement altogether.

There are other diversions, as horse-races, cock-fighting, bull-baiting, &c. as well as conformity to the world in gay, indecent, or too expensive fashions of dress, upon which we have not room to comment particularly. There is one grand rule applicable to them all, and which may afford a pretty good test of their propriety or impropriety. You will find this apostolic direction in Col. iii. 17. “Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed—do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father, by him.” Now, can you tell me how to see a play, to dance a minuet, or to play a game at cards—“in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to the glory of God?” Can you pray for the Lord’s presence and blessing on these engagements? A good man once convinced a company of the folly of these



things, by offering to say grace before cards, or to pray for a blessing on them. The company felt the impropriety, and asked him what he was going to do? The good man replied—"God forbid I should do any thing on which I cannot ask his blessing." Common sense forbids you to say—"Lord go with me to the play-house, and bless the good instruction I go to receive!" or, "Lord give me a good hand at cards!" Such petitions would be justly reckoned impious; but the impropriety clearly shews, that what cannot be done with prayer, cannot be done with a good conscience, cannot be done to the glory of God, and therefore ought not to be done at all. In all these things the consistent Christian must remember the text—"Be not conformed to this world."

APPLICATION.—From what has been said it is surely evident, that it is the duty of Christians not to be conformed to this world. It is plain that God's people are a distinct people, and ought to be a separate people. There is a holy singularity, though not an affected singularity, which well becomes them. This indeed requires courage. In certain situations, where persons have been closely connected with the carnal and the gay, and especially with the great, it will not be very easy to come out from among them, and avow that they belong to Christ. Yet, let none despair. The Scripture shews us how it may be done, 1 John v. 4.—"Whosoever is *born of God*, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our FAITH." By the new nature which the Christian receives, he gets above the terrors and allurements of the men and things of this world, so as not to be driven away by the one, or drawn aside by the other, from his duty to God. And this noble conquest is obtained, not by our own power, but by the strength we derive from Christ, through faith in him. Faith realises eternal things, and shews us how vain and mean are the pursuits of the world. Faith also realises the presence of God, and judges his approbation to be infinitely superior to the friendship of men.

Thus Moses, the man of God, triumphed over the world.—"When come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer af-

fliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Heb. xi. 24. It was *by faith* that Moses did this. Faith shewed him the vanity and danger of a court-life, of riches, and grandeur, and sensual pleasure. Faith also shewed him "the recompence of reward"—the glories of the eternal world, which he should continue to enjoy, when all human pomp is buried in the dust. He therefore wisely chose the better part, though attended with poverty and shame. With the crown of glory in view, he was willing to take up the cross, and even to glory in it. He determined to unite himself with God's people, and suffer reproach and affliction with them, rather than be conformed to this sinful and perishing world.

This subject shews the necessity of the new birth. If we would not be *conformed* to this world, it is necessary for us to be *transformed*, *by the renewing of our mind*, as the apostle adds, immediately after our text. Be ye *transformed*—changed into a better form—from being "earthly, sensual, and devilish," to become heavenly, spiritual, angelical; and this is done "by the renewing of our minds." The Holy Spirit begins this renewing work in regeneration, it is gradually carried on in sanctification; in dying, more and more, to sin and the world, until the blessed work be perfected in everlasting glory. Thus shall we "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The will of God, as revealed in his word, for our direction in this particular, and in every other branch of duty is *good*; good in itself, and good for us; conformity to it is *acceptable* and well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; and it is *perfect*—it is sufficient to make a finished Christian, "thoroughly furnished to every good work." O that divine grace may so transform our hearts, that we may prove, and prove by our own *experience* (for nothing else can teach it) how happy a thing it is to be wholly devoted to God, and to be governed in every respect by his sacred will.

## SERMON LII.

### PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

Matt. xxiv. 44.....*Therefore, be ye also ready.\**

**D**EATH is a most serious thing! It is impossible to express, in words, what a most serious thing DEATH is! Those who have thought and said the most about it, in the time of their health, have found dying to be a far more serious matter than they could before conceive. "The living know that they must die;" and yet, how few lay it to heart! How few there are who "so number their days as to apply their hearts to wisdom!" In small country villages, where death seldom comes, the people scarcely think of it; and "their inward thought seems to be, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations:" and in large cities, where the bell tolls every day, and people constantly see coffins and funerals, the commonness of death takes away the solemnity of it. And in some places it is shocking to reflect how little seriousness attends a funeral, and that by excessive eating, drinking, and unseasonable mirth, the house of mourning is turned into the house of feasting. All this shows that the heart of man is filled with criminal vanity, and how far it is from that constant seriousness which becomes mortals, living on the borders of eternity. Yet, when death comes into our houses or our neighbourhood, we should be particularly thoughtful. When it pleases God to remove a relation, a friend, or a neighbour, we should consider him as speaking to us—speaking the solemn language of the text, "Be ye also ready." It is as if he said—"Thoughtless mortals, remember your latter end. Consider this providence. Your fellow creature is dead:—he speaks no more—he moves no more—he breathes no more: he has done with all the businesses, all the pleasures, all the relations of life: he is stripped

\* This sermon may be peculiarly seasonable, when the providence of God hath removed a relation, a friend, or a neighbour.

of his former raiment, and wrapped in a shroud: he walks no more at large, but is confined to the narrow limits of the coffin: he mixes in human society no more; he is now the companion of worms: he has forsaken all his former possessions, and retains nothing but a little spot of earth, with which he will shortly mingle, so as not to be distinguished from it. This is the end of man. This will shortly be your end. Prepare for it; prepare to die; prepare to meet your God. Such is the language of Providence. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear it.

The words of our text were spoken by Jesus Christ to his disciples, with respect to the destruction of Jerusalem, and also with respect to the end of the world. The destruction of Jerusalem was a "coming of the Son of Man," to execute terrible judgments on the unbelieving Jews. The Son of Man will also come to judge the world at the last day. But the particular time of the first event was kept secret; "the day and the hour was known to no man." The same may be said of the day of judgment. Our Saviour uses this as an argument with his disciples to be *always ready*. "Watch, therefore," saith he, "for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." And this he enforces by two comparisons, taken from the common prudence of men. If any house-keeper was told, that some time or another in the night his house would be attacked by thieves, he would be sure to watch, at every hour, till the danger was over. And if a servant is ordered to sit up for his master, but knows not whether he will come home at twelve o'clock, at two, or at three, he ought to be watching, that whenever he comes, he may be ready to open the door:—so, *Be ye also ready, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*

The hour of death, is the hour of the Lord's coming to us. He comes to put a period to that life which his power had constantly supported. He comes to separate the immortal spirit from the mortal body. He comes to call the soul to his tribunal, and fix its state in endless bliss or woe. And although his coming will not be visible, attended with angels in the clouds of heaven, as his last grand coming shall be, yet it is equally important and solemn in its consequences to each individual. Jesus has "the keys



of death;" he has a right to close our lives when he pleases; and he has "the keys of the unseen world," to open the doors of heaven to his people, and to open the doors of hell to the wicked.

But the time of his coming is a profound secret; "of that day and of that hour knoweth no man." There is, indeed, "an appointed time to man upon the earth;" "his days are determined;" "the number of his months are with God," who has fixed bounds which he cannot pass. But, *where* the bounds are fixed, or how many the years, and months, and days—Who can tell? Is it not fit for us to know. If wicked men certainly knew they should yet live many years, their hearts would be fully set in them to do evil; they would be more presumptuously wicked than they are. And if weakly and timorous people knew the time of their death, they would thereby be made unfit for any of the enjoyments or duties of life. It is therefore best as it is. Thus we are kept dependent on the God of our lives; and, if truly wise, we are kept always watchful; always desiring and endeavouring, according to our Saviour's advice in the text—to *be ready*, which is the subject of the present discourse. We therefore observe, that

To be always ready for death, should be the first, the grand business of our lives.

No man, remaining in his natural state of sin, is, or can be, ready for death. "The wages of sin is death;" and he who dies "in his sins" must receive the wages of them. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness;" "chased out of the world," forced away in anger, and against his will, like a malefactor to the dungeon, or a criminal to the gibbet. The natural man cleaves to the dust; his head and heart are full of worldly schemes and projects of happiness; but death unexpectedly arrives, and stops him short. "In that very day his thoughts perish;" and "while he saith, peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh upon him, as travail upon a woman with child, and he cannot escape." He is perhaps saying to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry:" but God saith unto him, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee."

It is unspeakably awful for a person to die in his sins ; his guilt unpardoned ; his heart unrenewed ; under the power of that carnal mind which is enmity against God. " Guilt," says one, " is a bad companion in life, but how terrible will it be in death ! It lies now, perhaps like cold brimstone on their benumbed consciences ; but when death opens the way for the sparks of divine vengeance to fall upon it, it will make dreadful flames in the conscience, in which the soul will be wrapt up for ever."

Vain are the hopes of ungodly men with respect to death. They do not like to think of dying ; but when they do, they flatter themselves in their iniquity, and hope they shall do very well at last ; they think they have good hearts, or that their good deeds will make amends for their bad ones ; or that they shall have time to repent and make their peace with God, receive the sacrament, and get the priest's passport to heaven. O vain delusive hopes ! Such men generally die as they live ; and " what is the hope of the hypocrite ; though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul ?" These foolish hopes, not being founded on the word of God, are like a house built upon the sand ; and when the rain shall descend, the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon the house, down it must fall, and great will be the fall of it.

Only " the pure in heart shall see God." How can the profane man, who blasphemes his Maker every day, and with almost every breath calls for damnation, expect to meet God with safety ? How can the unclean ; the whore-monger, the adulterer, or the lascivious, expect to be admitted into the presence of a pure and holy God ? How can the Sabbath-breaker imagine he shall be permitted to keep perpetual Sabbath in heaven, who could not endure the work of a short Sabbath once a week on earth ? Shall the wilfully ignorant dream of a share in the inheritance of the saints in light ?—the dishonest man think to rank with the righteous ?—the self-righteous person, with those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb ? Alas ! all such hopes will be disappointed—" their hope shall be cut off, and their trust shall be as the spider's web."

What then is it to be ready for death ? In what does a real preparation for it consist ?

1. The foundation of the whole is, *an interest in Christ*, "Blessed are the dead who die *in the Lord*." Sin and death came by Adam; righteousness and life come by Christ. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned."—"Through the offence of one many are dead; yea, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Now, as our being *in Adam* is the cause of death, being *in Christ* is the cause of life. Our union with the first man has subjected us to sin, misery, death, and hell; union with the second can alone afford us righteousness, happiness, life, and glory. "I am," said Jesus, "the life.—I am come that they may have life; and he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

There is no security against the fatal consequences of death, but by believing in Jesus. The soul that is truly convinced of sin, that sees its danger, that is sensible of its helplessness, that is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, will fly for refuge to him, will trust alone in his perfect righteousness; and in doing so is secure. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." This, therefore, was the summit of St. Paul's wish—"that I may be found *in him*," that is, as he explains it, not having on his own righteousness but the righteousness of Christ, by faith. Phil. iii. 8. He saw that his own righteousness was insufficient. In the days of his ignorance he trusted to it; but, being taught of God, he discarded it; he despised it, as to the thought of appearing in it, or being justified by it. He now longs to be found in Christ; that is, in his righteousness:—to be found in it, as a safe refuge, in which the avenger of blood cannot reach him;—to be found in it, as the wedding garment, in which the master of the feast would accept him. There is no liking happily, nor dying safely, but as we are in Christ, and some who have vainly trusted in their own works, in the "secure hour of prosperity," have wisely thought better of it when they came to die, and confessed "it was safer to trust to the righteousness of Christ." If we are united to Christ, and are interested in his right-

teousness, death cannot hurt us ; it is like a serpent that has lost its sting. So the apostle beautifully speaks, 1 Cor. xv. 56. " The sting of death is *sin*, and the strength of sin is the *law* ; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Death is compared to a venomous serpent, that pierces and poisons. Sin is the sting of this deadly serpent. It is sin that makes death so terrible to nature : were it not for sin, death would be of little consequence, considering what a vain and vexatious world this is. And the strength of sin is the *law*—that which gives such a formidable power to sin, whereby it subjects us to the death of the body, and to everlasting misery, is the holy and righteous law of God, armed with its fearful curse, and binding the sinner under the guilt of his sin to the destruction of both body and soul. But thanks be to God, Jesus Christ has taken away the sins of his people by the sacrifice of himself ; redeemed us from the curse of the law, by becoming a curse for us ; and thus he hath deprived death of its sting. " Death shut its sting into our Saviour's side ; there left it ; there lost it."

This is the true and only foundation of our preparation for death. It is sin that makes death terrible ; but Christ hath taken away sin, and so taken away the sting of death. If, therefore, we believe in him, death cannot hurt us ; for " there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," the Gospel having freed them from the law of sin and death. " He that hath the Son hath life," " he shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life."

How much to be pitied are those poor ignorant creatures, who, in the prospect of death, comfort themselves with the thoughts, of having done no harm ; having paid every one his own ; having been good livers ; having kept church and sacrament ; and having been good to the poor, and so on. All these are refuges of lies, and will leave the sinner exposed to the curse of the law, and to the sting of death. As no man can keep the law, no man can be saved by the law. Only Christ our Surety could keep the law perfectly ; he did so ; and by so doing, has " brought in an everlasting righteousness, which is to and upon all who believe." Blessed then are they, and they only, who die in the Lord !



*To be in Christ*, then, is the ground-work of our readiness for death ; to have *Christ in us*, by his Spirit, sanctifying our nature, is equally necessary : and these blessings are always connected. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

2. We cannot be prepared for death unless we are prepared for heaven ; and no man is prepared for heaven but by the Holy Ghost. Our Lord has most solemnly declared, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Natural men think little of heaven ; they have little other notion of it than that it is not hell. But if they had any just conception of that holy and happy state, their reason would convince them, that without an inward change they could never attain or enjoy it. Heaven would be a burthen to a graceless soul. As well might a swine that wallows in filthy mire, be delighted with the splendors of a palace ; or a stupid ass be enchanted with the harmony of a concert, as a sensual carnal man be satisfied with the joys of the heavenly world. There must be a new heart, a new nature, and new affections, or there can be no relish for a better world. The more any thing, or person, on earth, is like heaven, the more the sinner hates it ; and, the more resemblance it bears to hell, the more he loves it. His carnality of soul, his love of sensual pleasures, with all the wicked passions of his mind, are daily fitting him for another place, and another sort of company. He is treasuring up food for the worm that never dies, and fuel for the fire that shall never be quenched.

But, by regenerating grace, the believer is formed for glory. God has given a new bias to his affections. He sees the evil of sin, and sincerely hates it. He sees the beauty of holiness, and ardently desires it. He sees the excellency of the dear Redeemer, and cordially loves him. He delights in the law of the Lord, after the inward man. He loves the truth, the day, the ordinances, the people of God. He sees the vanity of the world, and is, in some degree, weaned from it. He has a glimpse of the glory that shall be revealed, and longs to behold it ; and in this experience he enjoys a foretaste of heaven. He is not altogether a stranger to the joys of that celestial place. "He who

hath wrought us for the self same thing is God ;” and this experience is a blessed earnest of the future possession. The believer’s title to heaven is in the righteousness of Christ alone ; but his fitness for it is by these gracious operations of the Holy Spirit ; and he who enjoys them, in the greatest degree, is the person best prepared for the great change.

In these blessed dispositions consists the believer’s *habitual* readiness for death ; but it is usual also to speak of his *actual* readiness. Our Lord has illustrated the difference between habitual and actual preparation, by the similes employed in the context. “ A house-keeper is habitually ready for the thief, when he has taken all proper measures to secure his habitation, by doors and bars and bolts ; but he is actually ready, when he stands armed to oppose his entrance. So the faithful servant is habitually ready to serve his master at any hour of the day, in any work to which he may be called : he is actually ready for his lord’s return, when he keeps waking with the light in his hand.”

The believer is actually ready for death, when the graces of the Spirit in his soul are in their lively exercise. When faith is strong, triumphing over doubt and uncertainty ; when hope is firm, subduing painful fears ; when love to God, and Christ, and heavenly things, is ardent ; when he is actually employed in performing the proper duties of his station, or when calmly submitting to the afflicting hand of God ; when he is guarding against excessive cares, or undue indulgence of the flesh ; and especially when the thoughts of death become familiar and pleasant, and the views of glory bright and enchanting—then, with the world under his feet, heaven in his eye, and Christ in his arms, he may say with pious Simeon, “ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

APPLICATION.—How important is readiness for death ! Remember, death will come at its appointed hour, whether you are ready or not : And O how often at an unexpected hour ! Not seldom, death comes suddenly. How often do we hear of sudden deaths ! How many go to bed well, and never rise more ! or go out from home well, and never return !—Some are snatched away in the midst of their

amusements, and others while engaged in their callings. How necessary then to be *always* ready, to be ready *now*. Delay in this case is dangerous indeed. Almost all men talk of preparing at some future time; when sickness shakes them over the grave, or when the Lord removes a relation or a neighbour, by some alarming stroke, they promise themselves they will repent and reform: but the impression soon dies away; the world, like the returning tide, fills their hearts with its cares and pleasures, and the writing on the sand is all erased.—“So dies in human hearts the thoughts of death.”

But, O consider the unspeakably dreadful consequence of dying unprepared. We can die but once; and if we die in our sins we are lost, lost for ever! Once lost, lost for ever. There is no repentance in the grave, no pardon in the grave, no regeneration in the grave. *Now* then is the time; it may be the *only* time; certainly the best time. —It may be—Now or Never.

How happy is the life of that man who has “a good hope through grace;” “the full assurance of hope;” a solid, scriptural persuasion of his interest in Christ. He truly enjoys life; and he may smile at death. He may say with St. Paul, “for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” —While I live here, Christ is with me; when I die, I shall be with Christ. How contented and cheerful may he be in the humblest lot, who knows that he is an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. O happy, happy, happy, man! Do not you wish to be like him?

But what is your present course? If you are living in sin, gratifying the lusts of the flesh, and departing from the living God, you cannot have this assurance. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; and he walks not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. If you are living in sin, you cannot be happy.—You know you are not. You try to be happy by forgetting death; but you cannot forget it. The tolling of the bell, the sight of a funeral, or the news of another’s decease, will force the recollection of it, and it makes you miserable. You are like the man at a banquet, with a drawn sword hung over his head by a hair.—You cannot enjoy life for fear of death. O that you were wise! for religion is true wisdom. Forsake

the foolish and live. Let the wicked forsake his way and turn unto the Lord: Let him cry to God for the help of his Holy Spirit, without which no efforts of nature to get rid of sin will prove effectual; but with which, the strongest corruptions may be subdued, and the sinner prepared for death and heaven.

Let Christians remember their Lord's advice—"Be ye also ready, for ye know not the hour when your Lord cometh." Remember, even the "wise virgins" slumbered and slept. Guard against this slothful temper. Cannot ye watch one hour? Be sober; be vigilant. The Judge is at the door. Be diligent, believer in Jesus, and, like your Master, "work while it is called to-day; the night cometh, in which no man can work." Many have, on a dying-bed, repented of their negligence—none of their diligence. Now is the time for activity; there will be rest enough in the grave. And O, daily guard against every obstruction to actual readiness. Conform not to the world in its levities and vanities. Be much alone—be much with God. Make conscience of redeeming precious time, and employing all your talents for the glory of God, the welfare of your family, the church, and the world. In a word—die daily.

When God removes any one that is dear to us, what cordial consolation does it afford, if we have reason to believe he was ready for death! We must not sorrow as men without hope: The change is his great advantage. It would be selfish to wish him out of heaven, to reside again in this vale of tears. "We should scarcely dare to weep," said one, "If Christ had evidently taken the body along with the soul of our friend in heaven;" and why weep now? Absent from the body, he is present with the Lord; and though the body must see corruption, it shall not always be the prisoner of the grave. Jesus has engaged to raise it up at the last day, and to fashion it like his own glorious body. O let us prepare to follow our pious friends, favoured with an earlier call to glory; while we remain below, let us be active for God; and soon shall we join our kindred spirits before the throne, unite in the song of the redeemed, and "so be for ever with the Lord."



## ADVERTISEMENT.

*THE American Printer formerly published the foregoing 52 Sermons, in two volumes, and in two editions;—as he was about putting this edition to press, he thought, by economy, he could take in the following 13 valuable discourses, which have lately been received in America, and give the whole five volumes in two, instead of only four volumes, which the former editions contained. These two volumes contain all the Sermons printed in American editions, some of which have been printed in three volumes, at an advanced price—the whole are now printed in these two, at a very reduced price; and the Publisher has no hesitation in saying, that the execution of the work both for accuracy and workmanship cannot fail to give satisfaction to the purchasers of this edition.—Several errors have been detected and corrected from the London editions.*

*W. W. WOODWARD.*

*A few of the following Sermons are for sale separate, to supply those who have the former editions. Price 25 cents.*



## S E R M O N LIII.

UNIVERSAL GOOD NEWS.

Mark xvi. 15.....*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*

**T**HIS is the commission which our gracious Saviour, just about to ascend to glory, was pleased to give to his disciples; on this commission they acted, as their successors have done ever since; so that to this day we enjoy the unspeakable benefit of it, for "to us is the word of this salvation sent."

Jesus Christ had come down from heaven to save sinners; he had employed himself most laboriously in preaching to sinners; he had laid down his precious life for sinners; he was now about to ascend to heaven to plead for sinners; and, by this commission, he is providing for sinners till he shall come again. Having received all power and authority to govern heaven and earth, he first employs this authority in appointing the ministry of the Gospel; in providing the means of instruction and salvation to unborn millions; promising, at the same time, ever to support, comfort, and succeed his ministers; for "Lo! (said he,) I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Amen." May this important promise be fulfilled to us, while we search into the gracious meaning of this divine commission!

We learn from this text that

*It is the gracious will of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the good news of his great salvation should be proclaimed to every human creature.*

It may be profitable for us, 1. To enquire into the import of the word *Gospel*, which comprehends what the ministers of Christ are to preach; and, 2. To consider the order here issued for its universal publication. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*

The word *Gospel* is so familiar to our ears, that we sometimes forget what it means. It signifies *good news*;

and well deserves that name, for the Gospel brings to our ears the best news that we ever heard. Now, good news, if it be truly such, should bring us—*Information* of facts which we knew not before—*Information* of something *great*, in which we are personally concerned—It must be of something *good*, or it cannot be “good news;” and above all, it must be strictly *true*. When all these things are combined, it renders a message *good news*; and all these are certainly combined in the Gospel.

1. The Gospel brings us *news*; news, in the strictest sense; it brings us *information* of the most extraordinary things, which we could never have known without it.—Without the Gospel, who could have ever thought that the great God of heaven would have loved wretched sinners, or sent his dear and only Son into the world to die for them? who could have conceived that such blessings as pardon, reconciliation, adoption, holiness, and eternal life should be the portion of ungodly mortals? All this is so strange and extraordinary, that the Scriptures says of it, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him: but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit,” in the Gospel. The world at large, and even the Jews themselves, before the time of the apostles could have no just conception of this most sublime and glorious plan of salvation, as it is now revealed in the Gospel: and the more we enquire into it, the more new and surprising it will appear; for the Gospel has this singularity, that, however well acquainted with it we may be, it is always new.

The Gospel brings us tidings of what is *great*, as well as new. Never did a message of so great importance salute the ear of man! Never was any report of equal magnitude with this—“Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners!” The news of a decisive battle, of a glorious victory, of a general peace, may be great news, and greatly affect a whole nation for a time; but compared with the great events which the Gospel reports, they are trifles light as air, and trivial as the sports of children. The great things of the Gospel affect, not a few individuals only, but all the race of Adam; they relate not merely to



the present concerns of a single generation, but to the everlasting interest of every succeeding age, until the end of time. Much of that news which inquisitive men are anxious to receive and to communicate, is of no real consequence to them; but the truths of the Gospel are inseparably connected with our dearest interests; our life, our soul, our all, our everlasting all, is involved in them, according as we duly receive or wilfully reject them. We may say of the Gospel, as Moses did of the law, "It is not a vain thing, it is your life!"

Good news necessarily implies that the tidings relate to something *good*, as well as something new and great; and the Gospel is emphatically, and super-eminently *good* news. Never were any tidings communicated by such dignified messengers as these. God himself vouchsafed to give the first intimation of them to Adam, when he said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Jehovah, in a human form, repeated the Gospel promise to Abraham and the fathers. And when the Son of God entered into our world in human flesh, the angel of the Lord announced the grand event, saying, "Behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy." Our Saviour put an eternal honour upon the Gospel, by preaching it with his own lips, and employed several successive years in the delightful business: and though it be now preached by men of like passions with their fellow-mortals, yet they are Christ's representatives, and beseech us in his stead to be reconciled to God,—relief in the moment of danger, deliverance from threatening destruction, release from the horrors of confinement, supply in the time of necessity, may all be the subjects of joyful news; but neither these, nor any other possible occasion of human gladness, will bear comparison with the marvellous tidings of grace. And that which gives them a decided superiority above every information that ever gladdened a sorrowful heart is, that they contain *nothing* but good news, nothing to diminish the joy, or debase the tidings. The news of a great victory over an enemy, is much diminished by reflecting, that it has been acquired by shedding an ocean of blood; and that while we are triumphing in the important event, a thousand helpless widows and orphans are bitterly lamenting their vari-

ous miseries. But the good news of the Gospel is unmixed, it is purely and entirely good, unmingled with any alloy. The Gospel brings to our ears not a single word of grief or sorrow : we shall best conceive its nature by contrasting it with the law.

When the law was given on Sinai, the mountain burned with fire ; and there were “ thunders, voices, and earthquakes :” God was represented in all the terrible display of his holiness, justice, and awful majesty ; and so deeply were the people impressed with terror and dismay, that they entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more ; yea, Moses himself the mediator of that covenant, was not able to sustain the terrors of the scene, for he was forced to say, “ I exceedingly fear and quake.” And if people now, were aware of the spiritual extent of the law in its holy and just demands, and of the dreadful displeasure of God, whom they have provoked by their sins, they too would be filled with terror, and beg that the law might not be preached to them any more ; but the joyful tidings of the Gospel.

Now, blessed be God, we, as Christians, are not called to hear the terrible trumpet of Sinai, “ sounding long, and waxing louder and louder ;” but we are called to Mount Sion, or the Gospel church, where the sweet and soft sound of the silver trumpet of the Gospel salutes our ear, proclaiming good, the highest good, and nothing but good. So the Saviour himself began in the synagogue of Nazareth to utter the melodious sound. Unrolling the volume of the book, he read to this effect, “ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for the purpose to which he hath anointed me ; for he hath sent me to preach good news to the poor ; to heal those whose hearts are broken ; to proclaim dismissal to captives ; the recovery of sight to them that are blind ; and to set at liberty them that are bruised ; to proclaim the welcome year of the Lord,” the year of spiritual jubilee. While every eye was fastened on him, he proceeded to preach on the passage, and to show its accomplishment in himself when all the hearers were constrained to admire the graceful words which flowed from his lips. These words of grace continue to sound in the ears of all who listen to the joyful report of the Gospel.

And that which renders these tidings completely good is—they are *true*; strictly true; divinely true. In eventful periods, when men are eagerly listening for information concerning some most interesting fact; too often, some flying report reaches their ears, which, meeting with their wishes and their interests, is greedily credited; and, for a season, elevates their hearts with joy: but alas! the next messenger, or the next post contradicts the pleasing intelligence, and blasts all their joys with disappointment and vexation. Not so, the Gospel of the blessed God. Not so, the good news of salvation; for “God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should change his mind.” Every article of the Gospel history was a fulfilment of some ancient prediction, and so gave a wonderful confirmation of its truth; and the numerous miracles which our Lord performed, crowned with his promised resurrection from the dead, left no room to doubt the truth of his Gospel. The first preachers of these glad tidings confirmed them with infallible signs; for they healed the sick, and raised the dead. And the continual efficacy of the word in all succeeding ages, in converting sinners, and in sanctifying and comforting believers, is a standing and a satisfactory proof that the tidings of the Gospel are not only *news*, *great news*, and *good news*, but also infallibly *true*; so that he who believeth shall never be confounded. “Thy word is truth.” “The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ.”

Consider, for a moment, some of the glorious contents of the Gospel, and it will surely be allowed that the tidings are great and good: consider that weighty saying of our Lord; a saying worthy to be engraven in letters of gold—*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Observe here, love—the love of God—the love of God in giving his Son, his only begotten Son—in giving him to his creatures—to sinners—to enemies, and that they might not eternally perish by his justice. How unparalleled, how inexpressible is this love! O the height, the depth, the breadth, the length of the love of God; it surpasseth knowledge!

Consider what the Gospel reports concerning the glorious person, the gracious offices, and wonderful mediation of the Son of God. We justly call the history of these by the evangelists, *The Gospel*; for every thing that it relates concerning Jesus is good news. What joyful tidings is it that "God was manifested in the flesh;" that "the Word, who was with God, and who was God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The residence of a beloved monarch with a loyal people, affords but a low idea of *our* blessedness, since God, in very deed, hath condescended to dwell with man upon the earth. The people of Israel were happy in having among them such a *prophet* as Moses, with whom God spake face to face; but far greater is our felicity who have Jesus for our instructor, and who by his word and Spirit still makes us wise unto salvation.

The *priests* under the law were a blessing to the people, when as their representatives "they offered gifts and sacrifices for their sins:" but "let us consider the Apostle and High Priest of *our* profession," who, once for all, offered *himself* as a propitiation; has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; has made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness; and now appears in the presence of God for us, where he ever lives to make intercession, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost.

The triumphal entrance of a victorious king into the metropolis of his empire, after the destruction of his enemies, hath sometimes made the air to ring with the acclamations of his joyful subjects—"Rejoice greatly, [then] O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, *thy* King cometh unto thee: he is righteous, and having salvation;" "and he shall reign for ever and ever"—"The Lord God omnipotent." He has conquered sin, Satan, the world, and death; "and we shall reign with him for ever and ever. Amen."

The rich and solid *blessings* procured for the people of God, and proposed by the Gospel of Christ, are so immensely great, as to entitle it to the name of good news. Here is *pardon*!—"and pardon for infinite offence!—and pardon by means that speak its value infinite! a pardon bought with blood!" We can scarcely conceive of news more welcome than that of free pardon to a guilty crimi-



nal, condemned to suffer death ; and this is precisely the blessing of the Gospel—" Let repentance and remission of sins," said the ascending Saviour, " be preached in all nations." " All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to the children of men." " The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

*Victory* over a bloody, tyrannical enemy, is a cause of the greatest exultation ! How joyful the abolition of spiritual slavery ! How glad those tidings—" Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law but under grace !"

How joyful the news, that God will receive us into his family, and treat us as his own beloved children ; that he will be our constant guide through this dreary world ; that he will protect us from danger all our days ; that he will contrive to make all things work together for our good ; that he will never leave us nor forsake us ; that he will not suffer even death to hurt us, but render us more than conquerors over it ; and that he will make us unspeakably happy and glorious, in his own immediate presence, for evermore ! All this, and much more than this, the Gospel says, and is it not then, " glad tidings of great joy ?"

But we must hasten, in the second place, to consider the *order* issued by the King of Zion, for the *universal publication* of this good news,—*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*

Before this commission was given, the knowledge of the true God was confined, in a great measure, to the Jewish nation ; and the religion established among them by divine authority, does not seem to have been designed for general adoption. Our Lord thought proper to confine his own labours to the lost sheep of the house of Israel ; and he prohibited his disciples from going among the Gentiles. But now the happy time was come, when that great mystery, the calling of the Gentiles, should be unfolded ; when the partition wall, which separated Israel from all the world, was to be broken down ; and when all the former distinctions were wholly to cease ; that so, in Christ Jesus, there might be " neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision, nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ be all, and in all" sorts of people.

That general expression in our text—"to every creature," is very singular; doubtless every *human creature* is intended; and the expression seems designed to prevent any restriction or limitation whatever, in preaching the Gospel. The Gentiles were heartily despised by the Jews, and accounted little better than dogs: pride had taught some civilized nations to look upon all others as barbarians: and indeed many of the inhabitants of the earth were sunk so low in brutality, as scarcely to deserve the name of *men*. But our Lord would meet all the objections that could ever arise on this account; "preach the Gospel to every creature;" make no distinctions of civilized and uncivilized; of white, brown or black; but go into all nations; into all the world; and wherever you find a human being, however, base, rude, or vile, preach my Gospel; publish the good news of salvation for them, through faith in my blood.

But the expression, "preach the Gospel to every creature," is full of divine encouragement to the chief of sinners, *as sinners*;—to sinners of every degree and description. And herein it totally differs from the law. The law spake good only to the *righteous man*; it said "the man that doth it (doth it *all*, and *always*) shall live by it:" but the law hath nothing good to say to the *sinner*. On the contrary it saith, "Cursed is every transgressor." "The soul that sinneth shall die." But the Gospel is on purpose for sinners; it is justly called "the religion of a sinner;" nor is one word of it rightly understood, till a man sees that "*sinner*" is his name.

When Jesus was upon earth, such was the encouraging tendency of his preaching, that multitudes of poor abandoned sinners flocked to hear him; and many of them received pardon and grace: but this was turned to his reproach. Self-righteous people, who were proud of their morality, were grievously offended, and gave him this character, "a friend of publicans and sinners:" and so indeed he was, though by no means a friend of sin, as they insinuated.

When the apostles, acting under the commission in the text, first preached the Gospel at Jerusalem, many of the *murderers* of Christ were among the first converts. St.

Paul himself had been, before conversion, a bloody persecutor; but having obtained mercy, he holds himself up as a *pattern* to the chief of sinners, that no man who hears the good news of the Gospel should give way to despair. No, "Jesus came to seek and to save the lost;" "he came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

The Gospel is addressed to sinners, *as sinners*; and offers pardon to all who hear it. It is a great mistake, but very common, that sinners must first find some worthiness in themselves, by way of a condition of obtaining mercy: they must be first deeply humbled, and reform their lives, and then they may believe in Christ. But it is plain that this is looking for pardon as *saints*, and not as *sinners*. Whereas the truth is, that God, in the Gospel, *justifieth the ungodly*, Rom. iv. 5. (not that those whom he justifieth, remain ungodly *after* they are justified; God forbid!) but they are justified *freely*, by his *grace*, without any respect to godliness; and notwithstanding their *ungodliness*; and that they may become godly: and thus it is, that "where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound."

APPLICATION.—And has the Lord of all issued this gracious order, that his good news,—his gracious message, should be published to every creature? then, it follows of course, that it is the duty of every creature, where it is published, to *hear* it. It is Christ himself that speaketh from heaven, wherever the Gospel is spoken; and the command of Jehovah is—"This is my beloved Son, hear him! hear him! hear him!" yes, fellow sinners, "to-day, if ye will hear his voice;" "while it is called, to-day;" "hear, and your souls shall live." Open your ears to the good news. Shall this be the only good news that you refuse to hear? When profit or pleasure calls, you are all attention; but in all your lives you never heard tidings so good as these. The blessings proposed by the Gospel are such as you greatly need; such as you must perish without; and the hour will come, when you will *feel* your need of them. O that it may not come too late, when the door is shut! your time may be short. Delays are dangerous. And know this, that if you do not welcome this *good news*, you may expect *bad news*; and the verse after the text tells you what it is—"He that believeth not shall be

*damned;*" and how justly will they be damned, who refuse to be saved. If we reject the invitation of Christ to the Gospel feast; and, for the sake of the world and sin, desire to be excused, we shall provoke him to say, "none of the men that were bidden shall taste of my supper." Yea, there is worse news still. Hear it. "Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock you when your fear cometh," &c. Prov. i. 24. As yet, however, the Gospel trumpet sounds. O that you may hear and live!

Christians! is the Gospel good news? Rejoice in it then; let the frame of your spirit correspond with the nature of the message. Why art thou cast down, O believer! and why is thy heart disquieted within thee? Is there a dejecting word in the Gospel? No, it is *all* good news. You cannot have a want but it supplies; you cannot have an enemy but it disarms; you cannot have a fear but it repels. Reflect not on the Gospel by a gloomy walk; let your neighbours read the good news of the Gospel in your cheerful countenance and holy life. Angels rejoiced when they first published it, and still rejoice when a sinner receives it: ministers rejoice that they have such precious tidings to communicate; yea, Christ himself rejoiced when it was preached by his disciples with success. What cause then have *you* to rejoice!

When good news is received, we are eager to tell it to our friends. Now are there not some of your neighbours, your friends, your relations, who never heard it; never regarded it? O pity them; pray for them; and tell them the news: tell them that "Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners;" put a religious tract into their hands; invite them to go with you and hear the Gospel preached; and who can tell but God may be gracious to them?



## SERMON LIV.

### THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

Matt. xiii. 18.....*Hear ye therefore the parable of the Sower.*

THE preaching of the Gospel is an ordinance of God ; it is a sacred appointment of heaven, for the most important purposes ; it is the mean generally employed for the salvation of men : for “ it pleaseth God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

But all are not saved who hear the Gospel ; it has very different effects on different persons ; and it is the design of this parable to point out those different effects. Our Lord here compares the minister of the Gospel to a husbandman, the world to a field, and the word of God to seed-corn. He supposes some of the seed to fall upon a hard beaten path ; some of it into a shallow soil with a rocky bottom ; some of it near the hedge among weeds ; and a part of it into good ground, where it remains, springs up, and comes to maturity. By these different circumstances, he describes, with wonderful beauty and propriety, the various hearers of the Gospel, some of whom are careless and inattentive ; others make a showy but short profession ; others lose all the benefit of the word by their worldly mindedness ; but others, by the special grace of God, receive and retain his truth, and bring forth abundance of fruit to his glory, and their own salvation.

Let us then address ourselves to the serious consideration of this excellent parable, which we may do with the greater pleasure, as we are sure not to mistake its meaning ; for our Lord was pleased to give an interpretation of it to his disciples ; and this shall be our guide.

1. Let us first consider the *careless hearer*.

In a field, especially in a common field, it often happens that there is a road or foot-path lying across it ; and in scattering the seed, it is likely that some of it may fall on this path, which being hard and beaten, is not fit for the reception of the seed ; it lies uncovered, and is soon trodden down by the foot of the passenger, or picked up by

the numerous birds which generally hover about a field when it is sown.

This is a natural and perfect picture of a very numerous class, probably of far the greater part of hearers. Their hearts are totally unprepared for the word; not at all ploughed up by godly sorrow for sin; but hard and impenitent, so that the Gospel makes no impression upon them. They come to the house of God without having prayed at home for his blessing; without any spiritual desire to be profited; without a humble teachable disposition; without a wish to know and to do the will of God.

Such persons are usually *inattentive*; they sit like others who diligently listen to the word; but *they* do not listen; their thoughts are otherwise employed. Their eyes are surveying the congregation; observing who they are, and how they are dressed; for many go to church either to see or be seen; and take so much notice of the apparel of their neighbours, especially if it be new or peculiar, that it becomes a fruitful topic of discourse at home or in company.

The *preacher* is sometimes the object of attention, but not his *message*. They notice his person, his voice, his attitude; and perhaps make some critical remarks on his sermon; or notice a sentence or two which happened to catch their attention during the train of vain thoughts which occupied their minds.

It is astonishing to think how commonly the imagination is suffered to carry away the hearer from his proper business. Instead of a serious regard to the divine and interesting truths which the minister delivers, the careless hearer indulges his mind in the contemplation of schemes of worldly business; or he is pursuing some plan of future pleasure and amusements; or, what is still worse, allowing some speculative abomination to defile his heart, even in the presence of God. On these accounts it may be feared that, in the piercing view of the omniscient Searcher of hearts, a place of worship is sometimes a scene of greater wickedness than any other upon earth, and more provoking to his pure and holy eyes; for "he is not deceived, and will not be mocked." O how many may adopt the confession of the wanton person in the Proverbs (v. 12.)

“ How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof ; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me. I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation !”

On these accounts it is, that many persons present at a sermon can hardly be said to *hear*. What our Lord says of the Jews (ver. 15.) is awfully true of many of us, “ this people’s heart is waxed gross—and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed ; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and *hear with their ears*, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” Some are willingly and wilfully ignorant ; they shut their ears against the call of God ; and though they attend upon sermons, yet never hear them. A person of my congregation, who attended my ministry all her life, confessed to me on her dying bed, “ that *she never HEARD but ONE sermon*,” and that was the last before her illness ; it was charitably hoped that she then heard it to purpose, and died in the faith and hope of the Gospel. But throughout all her former days, such was the vanity of her mind, that though she was present under many hundred sermons, she never so attended as properly to *hear* one of them ; and doubtless this is exactly the case of a great number among us.

It is said of this sort of people (ver. 19.) that they do not *understand* the word, and that this is one cause of its unfruitfulness. It cannot be expected that persons who are so inattentive should understand it. The truths of the Gospel, though sufficiently plain and easy to the serious Christian, yet require the exercise of our rational powers ; and if persons are too idle to bestow this, they must remain in darkness and the shadow of death.

Another cause assigned by our Lord for the failure of the seed in the way-side hearer is, that *Satan cometh immediately and catcheth away that which was sown* ; just as the birds pick up the grains of corn which lie uncovered on the beaten path ; and this he does, *lest they should believe and be saved*. (Luke viii. 12.)

Satan, who is justly called “ the wicked one,” as being himself wicked, and the promoter of wickedness in others, is well aware of the great importance of hearing the word

aright: he knows, that if it be seriously regarded, understood, remembered, and mixed with faith, it becomes "the power of God to salvation;" it is therefore a great point with him to prevent its efficacy; and the surest way of doing this is to divert the mind from it immediately. This great enemy of our souls has certainly access to our minds; and though he cannot force us to sin, can present temptations to it. We are so ignorant of the nature and operation of spirit that we cannot say in what manner he does this; but we are sure, from the word of Christ himself, that so it is. He certainly exerts his powers to keep people from hearing it; or, to excite their prejudices against it; or, to prevent a due recollection of it afterwards; and in either of these ways he succeeds.

It is truly affecting to think how intirely the most precious truths of God are lost upon many persons; there is not a single trace of them left on their memory: they take no pains to remember what they have heard; or if the text, for form sake, be recollected, this is all; a story or a tale, however idle, is not so soon forgotten; but that word, "which is able to save our souls," is lost in total oblivion.

One cause of this is, that such hearers are strangers to *retirement* on the Lord's-day; instead of entering into their closets and praying for a blessing on the sermon, they take a walk for amusement, where every new object diverts the mind from what they have heard. Visiting on Sundays has the same pernicious tendency, for the conversation is generally on trifling subjects; and if it be merely compliment or censure on the preacher, it answers no good purpose. It is thus that Satan steals the word from our hearts; it is thus that thousands of good sermons are lost; yea, it is thus that thousands of immortal souls are lost—for ever lost.

2. But we must proceed in the *second* place to consider the character of the *temporary hearer*; or, as some have termed it, the *enthusiastic hearer*; that is, the person who hears the good news of pardon, life, and glory with a transport of joy; feels his natural passions elevated; but, having no root of humble conviction and genuine love to holiness, endures but for a time; "for when affliction or *persecution* ariseth for the word's sake, he is immediately offen-



ded, and falleth away." This sort of hearer is figuratively described by that portion of the seed which fell on strong soil, or on a rock covered with a very shallow bed of earth; here, though it might spring up and quickly too; yet, having little or no root, and no depth of soil to supply it with sufficient moisture, it was scorched with the burning sun and withered entirely away.

This sort of hearer differs much from the first. He is not inattentive; he is not indifferent; he hears what is said, and hears it with pleasure; he is *forward* to hear; he has warm and lively passions, which are suddenly affected with the novelty and grandeur of Gospel truths, especially if delivered with zeal and pathos; he is mightily struck and charmed with his new religion, and becomes a warm, perhaps a violent advocate for it.

The facts and truths reported by the Gospel are indeed great and glorious beyond expression. The divine perfections—the immortality of the soul—the miserable condition of a sinner—the love of God—the sufferings of Christ—the pardon of iniquity—the felicity of the heavenly world, are all subjects of a very striking and affecting nature. If these are preached in an animating and powerful manner, and perhaps in the midst of attentive thousands, the hearer who is divested of prejudice, and who possesses a warm and lively imagination, is immediately struck and moved; the preacher is unto him "as the lovely song of one who hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on a musical instrument:" he is charmed and delighted, just in the same manner as he would be at a well performed play, and with just as much religion. His conscience accords with the great truths he hears; and, prompted by self-love, he flatters himself that he is become, all at once, a very good christian, and has an interest in all the blessings which he hears described.

But this shallow professor *has no root*; in other words, he has no true understanding of the doctrines of the Gospel, especially as they relate to his fallen condition as a sinner; he has no humbling views of himself, as a guilty helpless creature, exposed to divine wrath, and utterly unable to help himself. He receives some crude notions of the Gospel hastily and without examination, taking all he hears

for granted ; but his judgment is not informed ; his conscience not convinced ! his heart not hardened : his will is not subdued ; his affections are not sanctified. He has no genuine faith ; his new opinions of religion are not derived from the testimony of God, but from that of man. He has a prodigious esteem for this or that favourite preacher, while, probably, he despises all others ; and the whole of his religion is usually *public*, consisting chiefly in hearing many sermons ; while he is a stranger to meditation, self-examination and private prayer ; neglects family religion, and appears to be under no influence of godliness in his life and conversation.

Can we now wonder if such a profession be short lived ? If this be all his religion it cannot last long. There is “no depth of earth ;” and as a feeble plant with a long stalk, and litte root, in a shallow bed of mould, must soon wither if exposed to a hot sun : so a profession of this kind, if assailed by persecution will quickly come to naught ; like Jonah’s gourd, which sprung up in a night, and perished as hastily beneath a scorching sun.

In the early days of Christianity the disciple of Christ was almost sure to meet with violent opposition ; both Jews and Gentiles exerted all their powers to suppress the religion of Jesus. Thus the profession of his disciples was soon brought to a fiery test ; and where there was no root, no principle of grace, apostacy would quickly ensue. The same trial of faith has been the lot of many Christians in different ages of the world ; nor are *we* to expect a total freedom from it now. We live, it is true, in a Christian country, where christianity is the religion of the nation ; but faith must nevertheless have its trial ; and “all who will live godly in Christ Jesus” must have a portion of “persecution.” If we are serious, sincere, and consistent in our attachment to the truths, ordinances, and people of God ; if we are determined not to comply with the fashions and vanities of the world, we shall meet with opposers ; and if these should arise among our near relations, and persons of influence, on whom we depend, our profession will be tried to purpose : if there be no depth of earth, no root, this hot sun will wither our sapless stalk, and we shall become barren and unfruitful.

Indeed, where no such heavy trial as this befalls us, circumstances the most trivial may be sufficient. An offence taken with the minister for his supposed personality in preaching, or at his want of sufficient respect and attention to his hearer; a wholesome reproof given in public or private; the exercise of godly discipline in a Christian society; or even a dispute with a fellow-member, a disgust taken about a seat in the church or chapel, or something else full as trifling shall prove a cause of offence, and the temporary professor lay aside all his religion.

There is a *third* sort of unprofitable hearers next to be considered; this is the *worldly-minded*.

Our Lord compares these to *the seed which fell among thorns*; these *thorns sprang up with it, and choked it, so that it yielded no fruit*; that is, this sort of hearers so far embrace the word as to make a promising profession of the Gospel, and afford some good appearances of reformation by it; but, through "the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, the pleasures of life, and the lusts of other things, it becometh unfruitful."

As the second sort of hearers went further than the first, so this third sort goes further than the second, and yet not far enough to be profitable hearers, or real Christians. In the first case, negligence was the bane; in the second want of principle; in this the love of the world. Carelessness ruins many; persecution oversets others; prosperity destroys the rest.

*Anxious cares* are here compared to thorns, and indeed very justly, for both are the fruits of sin; the pricking thorns in the hedge are fit emblems of corroding cares in the heart, and nothing more effectually hinders the success of the word. Some degree of care is necessary for the proper management of our lawful affairs; and "he that provideth not for his own household is worse than an infidel," but the cares of this life are apt to become immoderate and hurtful: they wholly engross the time, even that part of it which should be devoted to the more important concerns of eternity; they occupy the thoughts, which should be directed towards spiritual objects; they unfit the mind for religious duties, distract the heart in them, and prevent suitable reflections after them; they quench useful

impressions when actually made, and glue the affections to the sordid things of this world.

“*Deceitful riches*” also choke the growing word, and hinder its fruits. Riches are called deceitful, because they delude the possessor, as well as the spectator, with a false appearance of happiness; for the real happiness of a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of his possessions: but they deceive in a worse sense, they lead the possessor or the pursuer of riches, to put off from day to day the vast concerns of his soul, under the pretence of pressing affairs of this world, and so cheat him out of his salvation. O how many such persons “fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition!”

“*The pleasures of life*” ruin many other professors. Some pleasures are lawful, others unlawful; but even lawful pleasures, immoderately pursued, are destructive to the soul; and those who are not distracted by cares, nor deceived by riches, may be seduced by pleasure. When it becomes the chief business of life to gratify the senses, to indulge the eye with every curiosity, the ear with the most enchanting sounds, the taste with the choicest delicacies,—then men become “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” A life of sensuality and voluptuousness is inconsistent with the life of faith, which requires humility, self-denial, and mortification. It steals away the heart from God; deprives men of all vigour and zeal in religion, and utterly prevents their producing fruit unto perfection.

Thus have we taken a view of three sorts of persons, in each of which the proper effect of the good word of God is hindered—the careless—the temporary—and the worldly hearer. These alas! are too numerous; and where is the congregation in which all these kinds of hearers may not be found? Yet, blessed be God! it is not thus with all who hear the Gospel. There is one more description of persons, who may be called *sincere hearers*; who happily escape the preceding mischiefs, and who bring forth the good fruit of substantial holiness in various degrees. These are described in the parable by the seed which fell on good ground, and did yield fruit: that sprang up, and increased, and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an



*hundred fold; and these, as our Lord explains it, are they who hear the word, and understand, and receive it, and keep it in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.*

The good ground represents "*good and honest hearts;*" that is, hearts renewed by the Spirit of God, and which receive the doctrine of the Gospel with a sincere faith, and an upright desire of improving it to all the practical purposes for which it is designed.

These persons are said to *understand it; to receive it; and to keep it;* all these are necessary to fruitfulness. 1. They *understand it;* none of the rest are said to do so; and indeed none can, till the Lord the Spirit open their understanding to understand the Scriptures. God has promised that all his children shall be taught of him; and that they shall know the truth, and the truth shall make them free.

2. They are said to *receive it;* they see the beauty, propriety, and divine excellency of Gospel truth, and embrace it with the most cordial approbation: they "*receive it, not as the word of man, but as the word of God.*"

3. They *retain it;* it is not stolen by the birds of the air, but lodged in the memory, and kept in the affections, as a sacred deposit. Thus David says—"Thy word have I *hid* in my heart that I might not sin against thee;" and in another place he says, "I will never forget thy precepts."

4. They *practise it,* for "they bring forth fruit to perfection;" that is, the grain arrives at a state of maturity, which it did not in either of the former cases. The way-side hearer brought forth not a single blade; the stony-ground only a stalk, which was soon burnt up; and the thorny-ground only a lean withered ear, empty of grain: but here, the full design of the farmer is answered; and the single grain sown in the earth produces a number of grains of the same nature with the seed, and thus crowns all his labours and his hopes.

The proper fruits of the word as sown in the heart are *piety toward God, benevolence toward men, and temperance in the government of ourselves.* The whole is expressed briefly by St. Paul, when he describes the effects of the Gospel; "*it teacheth us that, denying ungodliness and*

worldly lusts, we should live righteously, and soberly, and godly in this present world."

But it must be observed, that this genuine fruit is not produced in every real Christian in the same degree—"some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred fold." Some begin to serve the Lord betimes; and therefore, in the course of many years, have greater opportunities than those who begin late. Some possess larger mental powers; a superior station in life; greater opportunities of usefulness; a sweeter or a more active temper than others; and, by the divine blessing on these and other advantages, bring forth a larger proportion of fruit than others. But it should be the prayer and endeavour of all to be as fruitful as possible; for "herein is my Father glorified," said our adorable Master, "if ye bring forth much fruit."

And now, my dear friends, what shall we learn from this excellent parable? Take the sum of its instruction in a single sentence—a sentence pronounced by our Lord himself immediately after it—

*Take heed, therefore, how ye hear!*

Indeed, sirs, it is no trifling matter. *We* may forget sermons, but *God* will not. If he will call us to account for idle words spoken by ourselves, can we suppose he will require no account of his own holy word spoken to us? O it is a dangerous thing to trifle with the Gospel! It will be found at last—"the savour of life unto life, or the savour of death unto death."

Beware then of resembling the *way-side* hearer. Go not to the house of God in a gay inconsiderate spirit; nor behave there with irreverence and inattention; it is an insult to heaven, and an injury to your own soul. Beware also of the birds of the air when you leave the church. Disappoint the watchful enemy of souls, who waits for your destruction; retire; recollect, and pray over the sermon.

Dread the thought of being a *temporary* hearer. Be not satisfied with the emotion of your passions under the word. Be concerned to have "the root of the matter" within you; that so, in the hour of temptation, you may be able to stand your ground, and not "draw back to perdition."

Beware of a *worldly-mind*. Anxious cares, deceitful riches, and carnal pleasures, choke the word and render it

fruitless. But, will you place these in the balance with the glory of God and your eternal welfare? O be wiser; and remember that weighty saying "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Finally, let it be your constant study and prayer to be *sincere* and *fruitful* hearers. Endeavour by a serious, diligent attention, to *understand* the word; by the exercise of precious faith cordially to *receive* it; by private meditation and prayer to *retain* it; and by daily observation to bring it into *practice*. I close with the words with which our Lord himself closed the parable—"And when he had said these things, he *cried*," probably with a louder voice than before; and O that the cry may reach our inmost souls!—"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!"

## SERMON LV.

### THE CONVERSION OF LYDIA.

Acts xvi. 14.....*And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.*

THE Gospel of Jesus Christ is a blessing, the value of which can never be fully expressed. Blessed, truly blessed is the people who know the joyful sound! Those who know it best will prize it most;—prize it above gold and silver; yea above their necessary food. Those also who are appointed to preach it, will rejoice in every opportunity of publishing the glad tidings to their fellow men. Thus did the first preachers of it; thus did Paul and Silas in the case before us.

In the course of their travels they were peculiarly directed to Macedonia; they were fully assured that the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel in that country. They obeyed the heavenly calling, and came to Philippi, the chief city of that district. The text relates the first fruits of their labours there. For some time, indeed, no opportunity seemed to offer itself for the commencement of their work. They were "in that city abiding certain

days," praying, no doubt, and patiently waiting for the leadings of divine providence.

At length, on the Sabbath-day, they walked to a place near the city, on the banks of the river Strymon, where the few Jews, or other devout persons, who lived at Philippi, were used to meet for social prayer. They lived among heathens who knew not Jehovah, and who paid no regard to the Sabbath;\* but these persons, who knew and worshipped the true God, used to resort to this retired place, that they might offer up their joint prayers, and encourage each other to persevere in the religion of their pious ancestors. Probably they were too few, or too poor, to be able to support a synagogue, as in many other places; but what they could, they did: and it is highly commendable for all persons, when at a distance from their regular places of worship, to maintain, as well as they can, the worship of their God, and the profession of their religion, even among heathens.

In this place, the ministers of Christ found a few pious *women*. We read of no *men* there. Perhaps these were on journies of business in the country: or, their hearts were grown cold about the service of Jehovah, preferring the love of gain to the love of God. However, to these women St. Paul addressed himself, declaring the great truths of the Gospel, respecting the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ. Let us, like him, seize every proper opportunity of diffusing the knowledge of a Saviour. The truth of the Gospel, is of infinite importance to all mankind. Ministers are to preach it wherever they can. Pious people should converse about it on all convenient occasions, invite their neighbours to hear it, and put religious tracts into their hands. Who can tell how happy the effect of such exertions may prove!

We are not informed *what things* they were which Paul spake to these women; but as it was his determination elsewhere, so no doubt here also, to know nothing among the people but Christ and him crucified. Indeed, we are told in this chapter (ver. 10.) that it was "the Gospel"

\* Phillippi was a colony of Romans, probably formed of veteran soldiers, to whom lands in its vicinity had been granted in reward for their military services.



which he was "*called to preach*" in this country; and no doubt it was the Gospel he *did* preach to the women—the good news of salvation by Jesus Christ. And afterwards, (ver. 17.) when St. Paul and his companion were better known in Philippi, this was the report of their character—"These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." This is indeed the first and chief duty of a minister of Christ; and may the ministers of Christ never forget it is so! We are also informed (ver. xxxi. 32.) that they spake to the jailer and his family "the word of the Lord," directing them to believe in Jesus Christ that they might be saved. These are "the things of Christ," "the things of the Spirit," "the things which belong to our peace," the things which the faithful servants of Christ are bound to publish, and which they who are ordained to eternal life are enabled to hear and to believe.

We may observe that it is very pleasant to speak of spiritual things to devout persons, such as Lydia was. There are people of "the baser sort, who speak evil of the things they know not:" and who are so brutish as to refuse a patient hearing to the most interesting truths; but Lydia and her friends were worshippers of God; and being met together for prayer, they were ready to listen to what the apostle had to offer to their notice. We do not say with the papists, that such a disposition "deserves grace:" that is a contradiction in terms, for grace is kindness undeserved. To grace, we must ascribe this very disposition; for, in general, persons turn their backs on all religious instruction; and sometimes manifest the malignity of their hearts by abusing the messengers of God and the friends of their souls. To the special grace of God it is also ascribed that Lydia did regard and receive the Gospel; so that it is not to be referred to her good disposition, naturally; but to the mercy and special influence of heaven; "the Lord opened her heart." It is an excellent thing to have a teachable mind. Whoever possesses it may be thankful, and expect a blessing from all the means of grace. Our Saviour himself says, (John vii. 17.) "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God," or not: as if he had said—"Whoever will

lay aside his prejudices, and make serious and impartial inquiries into the will of God, by hearing, reading, and meditation, with a sincere desire to learn and practise it, he will be sure to find encouragement in the Gospel to commend it; and will feel such good effects of it in his own heart, by the influence of the holy Spirit, as shall oblige him to conclude with complete satisfaction, that it is of God and not of men. It is a happy thing when people so read and hear the doctrines of the Gospel. They shall have the blessing that Lydia obtained.

In the further consideration of these words we shall observe, that,

1. There is, in general, an awful, a criminal indisposition toward the things of God.

The affairs of this world, its profits and its pleasures, engage the ear and possess the heart. They are pursued with avidity; they are constant subjects of inquiry, of conversation and delight. But how are the great doctrines, privileges, and duties of the Gospel regarded? How are the interesting concerns of the immortal soul and the eternal world attended to? The Gospel presents to our view things the most wonderful, the most interesting, the most awful, and the most delightful. But how are they received? Just as they were in our Saviour's days. Of this generation we may say, as he did of that, "It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling to their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." The most charming and affecting subjects of the Gospel excite no joy; the most dreadful representations of the word occasions no alarm; mankind are moved by neither; they equally disregard both. Let us inquire a little further into the unhappy causes of this fatal inattention to divine things.

Alas! for some persons, they are altogether become *brutified* in sin; for vice, where it has long reigned, brutalizes the soul, and leaves the man scarcely rational. Some are so deplorably immersed in sensuality, that it is almost impossible to gain their attention for a single moment to any thing serious and religious. The mention of any sacred truth excites only a smile of derision, and they treat

with contempt the most heavenly and holy matters. It is especially the case with those who have accustomed themselves to foolish talking and jesting, and whose imagination is so defiled and debauched, that the most solemn and sacred things are turned into folly and laughter. This is a most unhappy state of mind, and which young people should take pains, before it be too late, to avoid. Such persons are indeed "sensual, not having the Spirit," and to them the wisdom of God itself is no better than foolishness.

Prejudice against the truths, the ministers, and the professors of the Gospel, is another powerful cause of inattention to it. Prejudice of this kind jaundices the mind, and every doctrine of the word is seen through a false medium. Much of this prejudice may be traced to education, many children being taught to despise and revile every form of religion but that of their parents. Hence arises that dangerous bigotry which will scarcely deign to allow the hearing of Gospel truth, unless it be presented precisely in a certain mode. Hence thousands are kept from ever employing the right of private judgment, or using the Scriptures as a touchstone, content to pin their faith on the sleeves of others. Some odious name is frequently attached to the faithful and laborious servants of Christ. The apostles themselves were said to "turn the world upside down," and their adherents were deemed "a sect, every where spoken against." The immaculate Jesus himself was called "a deceiver, a Samaritan, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Thus, among ourselves, one opprobrious name is sufficient to counter-balance, in a prejudiced mind, all the wisdom and piety that can be collected in a sermon, in a book, or in a minister.

Other persons are kept from duly attending to the truth by the love of the world, which prevails in their hearts. Like Pilate, they have no fault to find in the Gospel preacher; nay, they will bestow occasional commendation on him, and allow that he is good, and zealous, and useful among the common people; but the world so fills their hearts, that there is not a corner in them left for Christ and his word. Business occupies the greater part of such a person's time; and how are his leisure hours employed? He wants

amusement, and must seek it in the tavern, the theatre, or some other haunt of dissipation. He cannot relish retirement ; he knows not what it is to sit down and read his Bible, or spend half an hour in thoughtfulness and self-examination. He can sometimes devote a whole day to a party of pleasure, but cannot spare an hour to hear a sermon. This indisposition towards the word of grace is peculiarly displayed on the Lord's day. He makes his weariness on Saturday night an apology for his sloth on the Sunday morning ; and when he rises it is only to dress for a ride, a walk, or a visit : he indulges his appetite at dinner, and renders his mind incapable of serious attention for some hours ; and then the evening is spent in sauntering or in vanity. Thus, those precious hours are wasted, which should have been diligently devoted to prayer, reading and hearing the word of life. Thus he makes light of that heavenly truth, which, through faith, is able to save the soul : and thus, if sovereign grace interpose not, he lives and dies in sin and unbelief.

Let us now proceed to state what that attention is, which the great things of God demand from every rational creature, and such as, we have reason to believe, was paid to the word by Lydia.

(1.) A *candid* attention. The preacher of the Gospel should not be pre-judged, or condemned unheard. If he be a man of good reputation and character, let him be fairly heard, and let his doctrine be impartially weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. The people of Berea are commended on this account, Acts xvi. 11. "They were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so." The Bereans were of a more noble, candid, and generous disposition ; they heard the apostle candidly, and they searched the Scripture from day to day, that they might judge for themselves of the truth of what he delivered ; and acting thus, they found such a correspondence between the Christian preacher and the Jewish prophet, that many of them believed.

(2.) A *serious* attention is due to the word, for it presents to our minds the most serious subjects in the world.



Death and judgment, heaven and hell, are serious things, and should be seriously regarded. We should not bring a light and trifling mind to the word of God. Are we not mortals? The word addresses us as such. Are we not sinners? The word is directed to us as such, and seriously sets before us the pardon that guilty criminals need. Are we not spiritually diseased? The Gospel proposes a certain remedy. Are we not at variance with God? Reconciliation with him, through Jesus, is set before us. We are the wretched slaves of sin and Satan: the Gospel is a proclamation of redemption and liberty. We are miserably poor and needy; but the word of God holds forth to us the true riches. We know we must shortly die and leave this world: the word of life teaches us how to conquer death, and to ensure an inheritance in the skies. Surely these things are so important and interesting, as to demand from us a very serious attention.

(3) A *devout* attention is requisite. Does God, the great God of heaven speak to us? Yes, indeed he does. He speaketh from heaven by his word: and this is the only way in which he will speak to us. We are not to desire a messenger from the heavenly world, as the rich man in the parable did. The revelation of the divine will in the Scripture is complete, nothing must be added to it, nothing diminished from it. "These things are written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, we might have life through his name." What reverence then is due to the word of God! In this manner the Thessalonians heard the Gospel from the mouth of the apostle, and he commends them for it, (1 Thess. ii. 13.) "For this cause also we thank God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Observe—these people not only gave it a hearing, but their hearts were opened, like Lydia's, to attend to it and embrace it with reverence; not as a human scheme, but as a revelation from God, and on the ground of his authority. Too many persons in hearing, look no further than to men, and to the words of men; and if they are pleased, it is with the voice

or manner of the preacher: but we should hear the word of God, as the word of God, and if we do so, it will be with reverence of soul.

(4) A *diligent* attention is demanded of us. It is not a trifling matter which it represents to us, it is for our life, and therefore should be regarded with the utmost vigour and energy of our souls. O, it is affecting to think what little pains are bestowed on the great concern, compared with what are employed on the ordinary businesses or the trifling amusements of time! How many are there who never took a hundredth part of the pains to secure eternal life, that they have taken to learn the business, by which they get their bread; and how many must have been starved to death, had they not been more diligent for their bodies than they have been for their souls! What labour and pains have been employed in learning Latin or French, compared with what have been used in reading the word of God! How many more hours have some young persons spent at a musical instrument, than they ever devoted to the means of grace: yea, in some cases, how much more attention to the card table, than to the word of life! But the Gospel of God demands our most diligent regard. The word of Christ must “dwell in us richly;” we must “meditate upon it day and night;” and “hide it in our hearts, that we may not sin against God.” Let it be remembered that we hear and read for *eternity*; let those words sound in our ears—for ever! for ever! for ever! and it will oblige us to give diligent heed to the word of life.

(5.) A *believing* attention is also necessary. The Gospel is called “the faith,” and “the word of faith,” because it is proposed to our faith, and received by it. It is the testimony of Jehovah, and demands the fullest credit. The word cannot profit our souls unless it be “mixed with faith,” and then it becomes “the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls.” It is proposed “for the obedience of faith;” and when it is obeyed, it becomes the power of God to our salvation. When we understand the Gospel aright, and perceive that Jesus is the only, all-sufficient Redeemer of lost sinners, we are encouraged to trust in him alone; we are constrained to esteem and love him above all; and enabled to comply with his directions,

desiring to obey him “in all things, whatsoever he hath commanded.”

(6.) A *joyful* attention well becomes those who are favoured with “the joyful sound.” If the Gospel be understood, it will appear to be nothing but glad tidings of great joy. It proclaims pardon; free, full, and everlasting pardon for the chief of sinners. And if this be really believed, it must excite joy. It did so in all the first converts to Christianity. When Philip went down to Samaria, “and preached Christ unto them, there was great joy in that city.” When the jailor at Philippi heard the word of the Lord, “he rejoiced with all his house.” And the Thessalonians “received the word,” though in the midst of severe outward troubles, “with joy in the Holy Ghost;” with such inward consolation, as made rich amends for all their afflictions. Finally,

(7.) A *practical* attention is due to this holy word. And where it is truly received it cannot fail of “working by love.” That pretended faith which is inactive and alone, is dead; it is not the faith of God’s elect. A true believer is a “doer of the word.” Therefore St. James says, (chap. i. 22.) “Be ye *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls.” He compares a mere hearer to a man observing his face in a glass, and slightly perceives some spots or dirt upon it; but it makes no impression, he soon forgets it, and the spots remain unwashed; on the other hand, the true believer intently looks into the doctrine of the Gospel, which is a doctrine of spiritual liberty; he *continues* therein—does not forget it—is not careless and unmindful of what he heard, or of what he saw of himself in that faithful glass, but takes care to live in the exercise of every grace, and in the practice of every duty—“this man shall be blessed in his deed;” “his fruit is unto holiness, and his end shall be everlasting life.” (Rom. vi. 22.)

It now only remains to observe, that *wherever the word of God is attended to in this manner, it must be ascribed to the grace of God*—“the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended unto the things spoken of Paul.”

Many women, perhaps, besides Lydia, heard St. Paul’s discourse; but we do not read that any besides her was

converted at that time. It was grace alone that made her to differ; "the Lord opened her heart." Her piety before hand in worshipping the true God was commended; but her hearing the word to profit is ascribed to the power of God. The eyes of her understanding were enlightened by the Spirit; for he alone is "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ;" he only can "take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto us." Without this heavenly influence, working in and by the word, such is the blindness of our minds, and the carnal enmity of our hearts, that we should never receive the Gospel aright; for St. Paul testifies that "the natural man (including the most rational man) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither *can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) Our Lord also plainly told the Jews, that no man could come to him unless drawn by the Father; but when he is pleased to exert his gracious influence, it is at once effectual, as it was in the case of Lydia. "When the Lord himself (says the amiable archbishop Leighton) speaks by his Spirit to a man, selecting and calling him out of the lost world, he can no more disobey than Abraham did, when the Lord spoke to him, after an extraordinary manner, to depart from his country and kindred.—There is a secret, but very powerful virtue in a word, or look, or touch of this Spirit upon the soul, by which it is forced, not with a harsh, but pleasing violence, and cannot choose but follow it; not unlike that of Elijah's mantle upon Elisha, 1 Kings xix. 19. How easily did the disciples forsake their callings and dwellings to follow Christ!" It was with this sweet but powerful influence the Lord touched the heart of Lydia. Her heart was opened, never more to be closed against the voice of God's Spirit. It was not a mere temporary affection to the word, a mere religious *fit*, as the apparent zeal of some may be called, but a renovation of heart and nature, whereby she became a new creature, devoted sincerely to Christ. Her sincerity was soon conspicuous, for she was not ashamed nor afraid openly to confess Jesus of Nazareth both among Jews and pagans; but was speedily baptized in his name. Her zeal was manifested by con-



secrating her whole family, (probably children and servants) to the Lord, for they also were baptized. She also displayed her love to Christ by a generous regard to his ministers; for she constrained them to lodge at her house, saying "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there." Thus did the Lord open the heart of Lydia, and thus he opens the hearts of all his people. "The understanding is opened to receive the divine light, the will opened to receive the divine law, and the affections opened to receive the divine love: and when the heart is thus opened to Christ, the ear is opened to his word, the lips are opened in prayer, the hands opened in charity, and the steps enlarged in all manner of Gospel-obedience."

To conclude. Let us be sincerely thankful for the word. To us, even to us, is the word of this salvation sent. He hath shewed his word to Britain, his judgments to England. He hath not dealt so with every nation. Praise ye the Lord!—When a scarcity of bread is felt, how severe do we deem the affliction! When plenty is restored, how great do we esteem the benefit! How much greater is the gift of the Gospel! Philippi was highly favoured when Paul and Silas paid it a visit. But we are more highly favoured. We have Peter, and Paul, and the Evangelists. We have Christ himself in his written word, together with the assistance of his ministers to explain it to us. Bless ye the Lord!

But how much is it to be lamented, that the human heart is so generally shut against the word of life! Ah! what enemies to their own souls are such persons! "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Well may we adopt the lamentation of Jeremiah, "Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears." The obstinacy of sinners in refusing to hear the voice of Christ is extremely affecting to a pious Christian, to a se-

rious minister. It was so to the compassionate heart of our blessed Redeemer, for when he drew near to the rebellious city of Jerusalem, and foresaw its approaching desolation, "he wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes." The season of obtaining eternal life is but a day ; if this be lost, the day of vengeance will succeed. Let us dread the thoughts of rejecting the council of God against ourselves, and so perishing in unbelief ; and let us who are now favoured with opportunities of reading and hearing the word, make a good use of them, lest they be finished, before the benefit designed by them is received.

We have been hearing of the grace of God in opening Lydia's heart. But let us not consider it merely as a history. Let each of us say—Has my heart been opened in the same manner ? Have I regarded the word of life with a candid, serious, devout, diligent, *believing*, joyful, and practical attention ? If not, surely my negligence of my best interest, and my contempt of the great God who speaketh from heaven, is highly criminal and dangerous. O thou who hast the key of David, who openest and no man shutteth, exert in me the same efficacious power, and from this moment let my heart be open to thee !

If indeed, your heart has thus received the word, it will work in you effectually, as it does in all who believe ; it will produce a happy and holy change in your sentiments, principles, and views, hearts and lives ; it will be, as our Lord speaks, like the lump of leaven hid in the meal ; it will gradually leaven the whole mass ; it will in some measure sanctify all the faculties of the soul, and all the members of the body. O that this holy word may dwell in us richly more and more, that "we may obey from the heart that form (or mould) of doctrine into which we have been delivered !"

## SERMON LVI.

### THE ENMITY OF THE CARNAL MIND AGAINST GOD.

Romans viii. 7.....*The carnal mind is enmity against God.*

**T**HAT the whole human race is deplorably depraved, is a general doctrine of the Bible ; and, that the mind of man, being thus depraved, is in a state of opposition to God, is the particular doctrine of the text. A doctrine, indeed, not very palatable to men in general, but absolutely necessary to be known, if we would avoid the dreadful consequences of that opposition : for, as the apostle asserts in the verse before the text—"to be carnally minded is death"—everlasting death and destruction : whoever lives and dies under the power of a carnal mind, must eternally perish. Now, our text accounts for this ; it shews the justice of this awful sentence, "because the carnal mind is enmity against God,"—it stands in direct opposition to him, to his perfections, his government, and his whole will ; it is not only an *enemy* to him, but absolute *enmity* itself ; and such is its desperate malignity, its irreconcilable hatred, that it cannot be brought into subjection ; the heart itself must be renewed by almighty grace, before it can be reconciled, or brought over to God.

This is a true, but awful picture of man. How different is it from that picture which man draws of himself ! For fallen man is proud, and vain, and very desirous of justifying himself : he cannot, indeed, say that all is right ; he is obliged to own that he sometimes does wrong ; but he seems to think it rather accidental than natural. He will allow that he has his frailties and failings, yet maintains that he has a good heart, and sincerely endeavours to do his best. Now it is necessary that these mistakes should be corrected ; and that we should trace the streams of vice to their fountain head, which fountain head you have in the text, "the carnal mind"—a mind wholly fleshly and worldly, delighting only in earthly things, and therefore averse to God, and entirely destitute of love to him. This

is the subject before us; a subject which may be considered as essential to the very basis and ground-work of all true and vital religion. May the Holy Spirit, who alone truly convinceth of sin, and leadeth to repentance, enlighten and impress our hearts, while we shew,

1. That the mind of man is indeed *carnal*; and
2. That, being carnal, it is in a *state of enmity against God*.

1. The mind of man is *carnal*—The mind of every man in a state of nature.

By the word *mind*—we are to understand all the powers of the soul; such as the understanding, the will and the affections; or as it is expressed by our reformers in the 9th article, “this infection of nature (called in Greek *phronema sarkos*) which some do expound the *wisdom*, some the *sensuality*, some the *affection*, some the *desire* of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God.”

The mind of man is here called *carnal*, that is *fleshly*, because its desires and delights are fleshly. The apostle, in this chapter, divides all mankind into two classes, ver. 5. “They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” Our Saviour himself makes the very same distinction, John iii. “that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The natural man is so intirely a stranger to every thing spiritual, and so completely devoted to the pursuit of worldly and sensual objects, that he is called in Scripture *flesh*. Man is indeed composed of two parts, flesh and spirit; but because his spirit is dead to God, and he lives only an animal life, he is very justly called *flesh*. So God said of the whole human race before the flood, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man,” namely by the preaching of Noah, “for that he also is *flesh*,” that is entirely corrupt and sensual; and this is the state of every man in the world, unless he be born again of the Spirit of God.

The *understanding* of man, however rational, is carnal; for this description belongs not only to the swinish sensualist, who wallows in the filth of grosser vices; but it is applicable to the most learned and intelligent person in the world, who is destitute of divine teaching. Hence we



read, Coloss. ii. 18, of the zealous Jewish teacher, or acute Gentile philosopher, who is "vainly puffed up by his *fleshly mind*:" and indeed, the human mind is never more carnal, than when swelled with self-conceit and proud reasonings opposed to the word of God.

The mind of man is remarkably carnal in its conceptions of the Divine Being, of his worship, and of the way of acceptance with him. Millions of men are, to this day, so grossly carnal, that they change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Yea, there are millions of men, called Christians, who bow down to a crucifix, and to images of the Virgin Mary, and dead saints, and pray to them for deliverance. Even among ourselves, how many act as if God were a being like to themselves, and hypocritically worship him with the body only, when their hearts are far from him! All this is carnal.

How carnal are the ideas of many persons respecting the holy law of God, contained in the ten commandments! This law is "*spiritual*," and requires the love and obedience of the heart: it forbids and condemns the first motions of sin in the thoughts; but many fancy themselves very good, and fulfillers of the law, because they have not committed the acts of murder, adultery, theft, &c. though they have broken the law in the thoughts and wishes of their hearts, thousands and thousands of times.

The carnal mind mistakes the *Gospel* also, as well as the law. The Gospel signifies *good news*; good news of the love of God to helpless sinners; good news of the atonement made by the blood of Christ; good news of free pardon, holiness, and eternal life, to be had, gratis, by all who seek them through faith in Christ! But how carnal are the views of many concerning it! Some understand by the Gospel, nothing but the history of Jesus Christ, his birth, miracles, death, &c. Others think the Gospel only a set of good precepts, given by Jesus Christ, showing us how we may make ourselves good, and save ourselves by so doing. Others, even some very learned men, tell us it is a kind of new law, offering us salvation on easier terms than the old law, namely, on the condition of faith, re-

penitance, and sincere obedience. But all this is a false and carnal way of thinking about the Gospel; and fully proves the truth of what St. Paul says, 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man (that is the carnal man) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are *foolishness* to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This is precisely true. Many hear the truths of the Gospel plainly preached for seven years together, and never understand one of them. To many others, the great doctrines of grace, faith, righteousness, holiness, and the influence of the Spirit, seem nothing but nonsense, and they revile them accordingly. And the apostle says it cannot be otherwise, "for they are *spiritually discerned*"—they are perceived in their divine truth and glory, only by an understanding enlightened by the Spirit of God.

The *will* of the natural man is also *carnal*. The will is that power of the mind by which a person chooses any thing. Now the will of fallen man is perverse, obstinate, and rebellious, "it is not subject to the law of God." It does not choose those things which are truly good and excellent, but rejects them with disdain; while it chooses those things which are carnal and hurtful; things forbidden by the word of God, and evidently destructive to the souls of men, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life," said Christ to the Jews: "we will not have him to reign over us," say many still.

The *affections* of the soul, such as hope, desire and love, are also carnal; and this is the principal design of the word *mind* in our text—"they that are after the flesh do *mind* the things of the flesh"—they prefer and pursue carnal and animal gratifications. "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" These are the inquiries of carnal persons: not, what shall I do to be saved? not, how shall I please and glorify God? no, the world and the flesh are the idols set up in the heart, and to these they bow down. The service of God has no attractions for them. "What is the Almighty, say they, that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" but how eagerly do they pursue worldly pleasures and profits! How violently are many

set upon the gratification of their appetites, in drunkenness and lewdness? Such is the strength of their carnal propensities, that they break down all fences, human and divine. Lust must and will be gratified, in opposition to reason and religion, and at the risk of reputation, health, fortune, and life itself. What will not poor carnal sinners sacrifice for a little brutish short-lived indulgence? How strong is the love of pleasure, amusement, and vain company? How attached are many to show and appearance? while others are more soberly bent upon ruin, by the excessive love of money; determined, at any rate to be rich: gold is their God; and to this they sacrifice their time, their talents, their strength, yea, their very souls. Thus, the world, in some form or other, is the supreme object of a carnal man; he “loves the world, and the things of the world,” and consequently, “the love of the Father is not in him.” Now this disposition is so exactly the reverse of what it ought to be; it so intirely opposes the holy will of God concerning his creatures, that he accounts it hatred and enmity against himself; and this leads us to the second part of our subject which was to shew;

2. That man, being carnal, is in *a state of enmity* against God. So God accounts it, and “we are sure that his judgment is according to truth.” Indeed, this is the very essence of sin, the sinfulness of sin; the transferring that love, which on all accounts is due to the blessed God as the most amiable of all beings, to his creatures; to objects infinitely vile and base in comparison of him. It is turning our backs upon him in contempt and scorn, as if he, whom angels adore, was not worthy of our notice. This conduct must surely be sinful in the highest degree, for, “guilt necessarily arises in proportion to the baseness of the offender, and the dignity of the person offended. An insulting behaviour to a servant is a fault, to a magistrate it is a crime, to a king it is treason.” What then is it to God,—the benefactor, the ruler, the Father of men? To forsake him, to take part against holiness and godliness in which he delights, is to become a rebel and “a hater of God;” this is enmity against God; and this is the temper of all unconverted sinners.

LET us give some instances of this in the dislike which carnal men discover to the *perfections* of God—to the *worship* of God—to the *laws* of God, and to the *people* of God.

The carnal man takes no pleasure in the *perfections* of God; he *thinks* that God is altogether like himself, or rather *wishes* that he were so. That glorious attribute, *holiness*, is peculiarly obnoxious to him; he cannot bear to think that God is so strict and severe as to hate and punish every sin, but would reduce him to his own standard. The *justice* of God he opposes and denies, and will by no means believe that he will eternally punish sin, although he has solemnly declared that he will: consequently the sinner denies the *truth* of God. If Jehovah say, “In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die,” the carnal mind, tutored by Satan, says, “I shall not surely die,” but I shall be wiser and happier by my sins. True holiness consists in the restoration of the divine image in the soul; but the carnal mind turns with disgust from God, and desires not to imitate his *perfections*.

The carnal mind greatly dislikes the spiritual *worship* of God. That which constitutes the joy of holy angels and redeemed sinners, is an intolerable burden, and therefore wholly omitted, or very carelessly performed. Some scruple not to ridicule the joys of glorified saints, as if it were only “sitting on the bare clouds, and continually singing psalms;” and they will own they can conceive of no heaven superior to the pleasures of the tavern and the brothel. If such persons drag themselves to the church, their wandering eyes, their trifling and irreverent conduct, prove that their hearts are not there: and the man that can easily support the fatigue of a hot and crowded play-house for four or five hours, is extremely tired with an hour and a half in the house of God. See him engaged in the amusements of the chase, the card-table, the race-ground, or the play-house, and his eyes sparkle with delight; he anticipates the pleasure before it arrives, and he talks of it with raptures when it is past. But, at church, he is listless, and supine: he gapes or sleeps; and no part of the service affords a moment’s pleasure but the words of dismissal. Thus he serves his God, in a way that he would



be ashamed to serve a fellow worm ; and he springs from the church, like a bird from a cage, glad that his confinement is over, and that worldly conversation, his repast, or some other amusement, may better occupy his carnal mind.

As to *private* devotion, he knows little or nothing of it. It is, perhaps, wholly omitted for years together ; or when conscience and fear make him drop on his knees, the irksome task is soon despatched. He has no communion with God, nor does he conceive that it would afford him any delight.

Our text instances the enmity of the carnal mind in its opposition to the *law of God*—" it is not subject to the law of God." The law of God is holy, and just, and good ; it requires only that we should love him supremely, and our neighbour disinterestedly. God certainly has a right to require this ; and it is our most reasonable service : but the carnal mind refuses submission. " Who is the Lord, that I should obey him ?" is the language of every sinner, as well as of Pharaoh. " His yoke is easy, and his burden is light ;" but, as the prophet says, " they pull away the shoulder, they stop their ears that they should not hear." They consider the law of God as a hard restraint upon their vicious and corrupt inclinations, their worldly interests and sensual pleasures.

Nor is the enmity of the carnal mind against the *Gospel*, less than that against the law. The Gospel is a glorious dispensation of grace and mercy towards ruined sinners, in which infinite wisdom, justice, holiness and mercy are sweetly united : a system every way honourable to God and suitable to man, and therefore worthy of all acceptance. But the carnal mind opposes even this. The proud pharisee disdains to submit to the righteousness of Christ ; the carnal worldling, intent upon his land, his oxen and his farm, begs to be excused : the vain philosopher, puffed up with his mental acquirements, cavils at all its humbling doctrines ; and thus, all agree to reject the council of God against themselves.

The carnal mind betrays its inward enmity against God, by a settled contempt and hatred against his *people*. God has a people in the world, " called, chosen, and faithful :"

they are a separate people ; and distinguished by their attachment to his word and ways. This very circumstance renders them obnoxious to carnal men ; for “ they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Now the carnal mind is the very principle of persecution. This has been the source of opposition to the church of God in all ages, from the time of righteous Abel to the present moment ; but we are not to be offended at this. Our Lord has said, “ Marvel not that the world hate you ; it hated me before it hated you.” Let this reconcile the people of God to the cross.

Thus have we briefly described the carnal mind, and shown its enmity against God. But what words can paint its criminality and vileness ? What can be said of it, equal in force, to what the apostle says in the text—“ it is not subject to the law of God, *neither indeed can be* ;” it *cannot* be subject ; it is not the nature of the carnal mind to submit to God ; it is as contrary to it, as light is to darkness. An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. Nothing can remove it but the divine power of renewing grace, bestowing a spiritual mind upon us.

ADDRESS.—My friends ! If the mind of man be thus carnal, and the carnal mind be thus inimical to God, it is a matter of the most serious consideration, whether we are now under the power of it, or happily delivered by grace. Such as the *mind* is, such will the walk and conversation be. Review the particulars before-mentioned, and strictly enquire how it is with you. The decision is of the utmost consequence, for “ they who are in the flesh cannot please God,” ver. 8 ; but, on the contrary are under his dreadful displeasure, and liable to his eternal wrath ; for “ if we live after the flesh we shall die.”

What need then of humiliation ! How ill does it become a fallen creature, with a heart so carnal, to boast of its excellence ; and call that a *good heart*, which the Scripture pronounces to be carnal, and enmity against God. Surely, instead of boasting, the deepest sorrow and shame become us. We should abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes ; for what can be so vile and abominable as this carnal disposition. This is the true source of all our sinful actions : for the carnal walk is produced by the carnal

mind ; and even they who may not be chargeable with gross immoralities, may have reason to charge themselves with this horrid temper ; and if any are disposed to deny that they are carnally minded, the denial itself proves beyond a doubt that they are altogether carnal. For even the best of men, the most wise, holy and pious, are conscious of the remains of this wretched temper. “ This infection of nature (say our reformers) doth remain even in them that are regenerate ;” and St. Paul affirms, that the flesh lusteth against the spirit. Yea, he says of himself, in a comparative view, “ the law is spiritual, but I am carnal.” Rom. vii. 14. “ Go,” saith a modern writer, “ go with the serious Christian into his closet, ask him *his* opinion of the corruption of the heart, and he will tell you that he is deeply sensible of its power ; for he has learned it from much self-observation, and long acquaintance with the workings of his own mind. He will tell you that every day strengthens this conviction ; yea, that hourly he sees fresh reason to deplore his want of simplicity in intention ; his infirmity of purpose, his low views, his selfish unworthy desires, his backwardness to set about his duty, his languor and coldness in performing it ; that he finds himself obliged continually to confess, that he feels within him two opposite principles, and that ‘ he cannot do the things that he would.’ ”

This true humiliation of spirit will render the blessings of the Gospel very precious. The consciousness of so much evil, not only in the life but in the heart, will oblige us to seek for pardoning mercy, through faith in the Redeemer ; and that blood will appear to us invaluable precious, which can, and does, cleanse us from so much sin. The love of God will appear, as it is, inexpressibly wonderful, when fixed upon creatures so destitute of every thing meritorious ; and the grateful language of the saved sinner will be, “ What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits ! ” Are we conscious that “ whereas we were once blind now we see ; ” that we can sincerely delight in the perfections of God, in the worship of God, in the law of God, and in the people of God ? O let the pleasing change be reviewed with thankfulness and the

glory ascribed, where alone it is due, to the God of all grace ; and be it our daily concern to “ walk in the Spirit,” and to bring forth “ the fruits of the Spirit, in all righteousness and goodness.”

There is one other truth fairly deducible from what has been said of the carnal mind, and that is—*the necessity of regeneration*, or the new birth. For this we have the highest authority. Our Saviour saith, “ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God :” and when this doctrine was objected to by the carnal mind of Nicodemus (and carnal minds always object to it) our Lord confirmed the truth of it, by assigning this reason for its necessity—“ That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit ;” which shows (as Mr. Burkit observes) “ that as original corruption is conveyed by natural generation, so saving regeneration is the effect and product of the Holy Spirit’s operation.” “ Can the Ethiopian change his skin,” saith the prophet, “ or the leopard his spots ? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” Here the difficulty mentioned is only that of breaking off a habit or custom, which is reckoned *a second nature* ; but how much greater must be the difficulty of altering a nature itself, a carnal nature, a carnal mind, the nature of which is enmity against God ! Surely the power of almighty God is necessary here, even that same power which said “ Let there be light, and there was light.” O that this new creating power may be graciously displayed in changing the carnal into the spiritual mind : “ for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”



## SERMON LVII.

MARTHA AND MARY;

OR,

### THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

Luke x. 41, 42.....*And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

OUR adorable Saviour, whose gracious employment it was to go about doing good, was pleased, in one of his journies, to call at a friend's house in Bethany, a little village about two miles from Jerusalem. There dwelt, in one happy house, Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary; all pious persons and humble disciples of the blessed Jesus. Martha was probably the housekeeper, for it is said, ver. 38, that "she received him into her house." He, who was the Maker of all, and the Lord of all, was for our sakes so poor, that he had not a place where to lay his head, no house of his own; but, here and there, a pious person was found, who thought it the highest honour to entertain him. In a spiritual sense, Jesus still stands at the door of our house, of our hearts, and knocks for admittance. O that we may open our hearts, and most cordially receive the heavenly guest.

No sooner was he seated, than he began to instruct the family in divine things: thus should we thankfully embrace every fit opportunity of discoursing on subjects which belong to our peace. Let religion have a place in the parlour as well as in the church.

When this heavenly Teacher opened his mouth, the domestic circle was all attention; so much is signified by the expression "*Mary sat at Jesus' feet*, and heard his word." A humble heart and a humble posture well become the disciples of Christ, when they hear his word. When Christ began his discourse, Martha as well as Mary was diligently attentive; for it is said—"she had a sister, who *also* sat at his feet." But, as some attention from the

mistress of the house was necessary, to procure refreshment for the numerous guests, (for there must have been thirteen in number if all the apostles were there;) Martha, who appears to have been of an active turn, left the room to superintend the business of the kitchen. She denied herself the pleasure of continuing to regard his charming discourse, for the purpose of making an abundant preparation for our Lord and his friends; a preparation, it should seem, far greater than was necessary. Finding this care and labour too much for her strength and spirits, she returns to the room to complain of her sister; she came to Jesus, and said "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me."

While we must commend the hospitality and generosity of Martha, in wishing to entertain her guests in a liberal manner, we cannot but observe something blameable in this application. She had certainly lost her temper, and was improperly angry with her sister. She should have made some allowance for the pious zeal of Mary, who was too deeply engaged in listening to Jesus, to recollect the affairs of the house. If her help was necessary, Martha might have beckoned her out, or whispered the request in her ear. But it was still more blameable to insinuate a degree of censure on our Lord himself, as if he was to blame for detaining her. "Dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" This was very indecent and disrespectful. If she thought it wrong that her younger sister should indulge her ease, while she was so hard at work, yet why was the Lord to be censured, as if he were the cause of it? But, while we detect this infirmity of Martha, let us correct the same fault in ourselves. We are too apt to lose our composure in a hurry of worldly business; too apt to find fault with our fellow Christians when they do not come up to our standard; and what is much worse, to murmur at cross providences, and quarrel with heaven itself. For this is sometimes the language of our dissatisfaction—"Lord, dost thou not care that I am so ill, so perplexed, so persecuted, so deserted, so helpless?" O let us beware of this temper, and we shall be angry with ourselves rather than with Martha.

As this question was proposed to our Lord himself, he is pleased to answer it. Mary, who was blamed, remains silent ; she leaves her defence to an abler advocate. Jesus kindly passes over the censure which was aimed at himself, but fully vindicates Mary's conduct ; while he tenderly reproves Martha for her extreme anxiety.

Our Lord well knew the state of her mind—" she was *cumbered* about *much serving*"—anxious to make a great entertainment, and to have every thing in exact order ; she was *cumbered* about this ; almost *distracted* with the hurry and bustle it occasioned in the family. This was no doubt out of respect to her much-esteemed visitor ; yet probably there was a little mixture of pride in the business ; a wish to set off the whole to the best advantage, as is too common, even with good people, on such occasions, whereby the spiritual comfort both of the hostess and the guests is often diminished. Jesus therefore gave her a gentle rebuke. " Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things." He was no doubt pleased with her good intention to entertain him ; but he was not pleased at her making a great feast, as if he took delight in a sumptuous table. He did not covet delicacies ; nor is he pleased with the luxury of his professing people ; nor with the great expense and great trouble which a splendid entertainment requires. He would have been more satisfied with seeing Martha sitting with Mary to hear his instructions ; " he was better pleased to see Mary in the chapel than Martha in the kitchen."

• That which most displeased him was, that her attention to *many things* obliged her, for the present, to neglect the *one thing*, that which was the great thing he came to her house for, namely, to teach and instruct the family ; and this was " the one thing" to which Mary wisely confined her attention. When, therefore, he blames Martha for too much regarding many *worldly* things, he commends Mary for regarding that one *spiritual* thing, the care of her soul, by improving the present opportunity of enjoying his instruction. " One thing," said he, " is *needful*"—is his absolutely necessary, indispensibly necessary ; and consequently all other things must give place to it. He therefore adds—" and Mary hath chosen that good part, which fore

shall not be taken away from her :” as if he had said, your dear sister has such a just and affecting sense of the infinite value of her immortal soul, and so earnest a desire of improving the present opportunity of becoming wise to salvation, that she has judiciously given the preference to my company ; and in doing this she has chosen the good portion, and secured a blessing that she shall never lose.

Thus Martha was reproved, and Mary commended. It must have been a great disappointment to the former ; she expected a different kind of answer : but Christ is faithful ; and “ whom he loveth he chasteneth.” It was because he loved her that he rebuked her ; and, as she was truly a pious woman, no doubt she profited by the reproof, and loved him for it more than ever.

There is much solid instruction to be derived from this little history. The blameable anxiety of Martha, and the pious devotion of Mary, gave occasion for our Lord’s delivering one of the most weighty sayings that words can possibly express ; a saying worthy to be written in letters of gold ; a saying worthy to be affixed in every church, in every house, in every heart. May the finger of God inscribe it on our inmost souls !

### ONE THING IS NEEDFUL!

For our further instruction from this pleasing and most interesting passage, it may be proper to observe the three following truths :

1. The care of the soul is the one thing needful :
2. The cares of the world greatly obstruct this religious care.
3. Truly religious persons possess a portion which they shall never lose.

We are first to observe, that *the care of the soul* is the one thing needful : it is the religious care of the soul that our Lord here intends, as appears from his opposing Mary’s care to Martha’s cares ; she cared for *many* things ; Mary for *one* ; and she manifested this care by a studious attention to every word that dropped from his lips. But this short sentence comprehends a great deal.

The care of the soul implies a consideration of its infinite value and importance, as immortal. According to



our Saviour's words in another place, "what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The care of the soul includes the diligent use of all those means which God has appointed for its salvation; the first of which is, a due regard to the word of God. Thus Mary proved her care; and thus must we. It is true we have not now the bodily presence of this great teacher, yet we have his word; we have that Gospel which he ordered to be preached to all nations, and which he promised to sanction with his spiritual presence to the end of the world. This Gospel is able to make us "wise to salvation;" and it is his "power to salvation." Those, therefore, are most like Mary, who pay the most diligent regard to his word both in public and private.

Prayer also is a necessary branch of this religious care. That person cannot have much concern for his soul who neglects this duty: but he who knows and feels that he is a miserable sinner, will most gladly apply to the throne of grace for mercy. This will be the daily business of every one who has a due concern for his soul. "Behold, he prayeth!"

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is also the proper effect of this care. The word of God every where directs the sinner to Jesus, as the only deliverer from the wrath to come; so when the jailor evinced a concern for his soul, by crying "What shall I do to be saved?" the apostle immediately replied—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This is indeed the one thing needful. All our religious cares meet in this point; for there is no name under heaven whereby we must be saved, but the precious name of Jesus; the soul, therefore, that is taught of God, rests in nothing short of this; as it is written, "Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me;" and, blessed be his dear name, it is added, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." The person that is duly concerned for his soul, wants those blessings which are only to be found in Jesus; and here they are all ready for him. Jesus is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification and redemption; every thing needful to make a poor sinner rich, and

a miserable sinner happy. Yes: Jesus Christ is all and in all.

The care of the soul will influence the whole conduct of a believer; he cannot live at large as other men do. The fear of the Lord is in his soul. The love of God is shed abroad in his heart. The commandments of God are written upon his mind. Sin therefore becomes his aversion, holiness his delight, religion his element, the people of God his companions, and heaven the prize at which he aims.

Take these thoughts and put them together: you will then surely admit that this religious concern is the one thing needful. It must be so, if the soul itself be of any value; if it be immortal; if it must exist for ever, either in bliss or woe. Is there a state of everlasting misery for impenitent sinners? The God of truth declares there is. He who spake the words of our text to Martha, speaks also of the day of judgment, when he will say to the wicked, "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now if we believe this, we shall fly from the wrath to come; it will be the first concern of our souls to avoid eternal torments. What can be so dreadful as hell? What can be so necessary as to escape it?

Is there, on the other hand, a state of complete and everlasting happiness in heaven? Will Christ say to his people, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?" And is it certain that the true Christian shall enjoy the presence and glory of the Redeemer to all eternity? Surely then, that religious care which he has made necessary to the attainment of this happiness, must be the one thing needful. What, if Martha's cares would procure mines of silver, crowns of gold, sceptres, jewels and kingdoms, in all their rich abundance; what are these compared to the glorious blessedness of saved sinners, connected with Mary's solicitude for the one thing needful?

But besides these important concerns of futurity, religion is the one thing needful, even *now*. Godliness hath the promise of the present life, as well as of that to come. How many snares are avoided? how many mischiefs are

prevented? how much solid peace of mind procured, by the truly religious person? What happy individuals, what happy families, happy towns, and happy kingdoms would there be, if the blessed religion of the Gospel prevailed in all its beauty and power! This then is the great concern, this the first business, the chief end of man. Compared with this, the most important affairs of the greatest empires are trifles light as air. "Vanity of vanities, said the royal preacher, all is vanity and vexation of spirit;" but he adds, as the conclusion of all his pursuits and discoveries—"Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man:" or, as it is expressed in a similar passage, and with the like solemnity—"Behold! the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding."

If then we give credit to the testimony of wise and good men, to the testimony of God throughout the Scriptures, or to the testimony of our divine Saviour in the text, we are obliged to assent to the important maxim—The care of the soul is the one thing needful. And if it be so, we must stop and enquire, how it comes to pass that so few persons make it any part of their care, very few indeed their first and principal care? How can we account for this? Probably it is not because they are not convinced of the truth, for there are serious moments in which the most careless sinners admit it; but it is to be accounted for in the prevalence of worldly cares, which, for want of faith in the reality of eternal things, press upon them so closely, that like Martha they are careful, and cumbered, and troubled, to the great neglect of the chief concern. And this leads us in the second place to observe that

2. The cares of the world greatly obstruct this religious care. The case of Martha is a proof of this. She was blameable; yet not half so blameable as many are; for her cares were all directed to the accommodation of the Lord Jesus and his friends; but our cares have commonly our own interest and comfort only in view.

It may be said here, "are not worldly cares necessary? Must we shut up ourselves in a cell, and do nothing but say our prayers?" We readily admit that worldly cares, in their proper place and proportion, are unavoidable, are

absolutely necessary. We have bodies as well as souls : these must be provided for ; and, to make this provision, care and labour are necessary. Religion was never designed to make us idle, and St. Paul directs, that if any man will not work he shall not eat. Every person, therefore, in his own station, has his own proper cares ; the servant ; the master ; the tradesman ; the house-keeper ; the magistrate ; and, the same apostle says—" If any provide not for his own, (his own relations) and especially for those of his own house, (his family) he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. v. 8.) It is not therefore against the necessary cares attached to our several stations in life that we speak, but against the *excessive degree* of them, against that degree of them which hinders and obstructs the superior care of the soul. And here lies the danger of the more moral and virtuous part of mankind ; for we do not now speak of persons who live in known and wilful sins, such as drunkenness, whoredom, profaneness, or any other gross vice ; these abominations most evidently war against the soul, and must end in its everlasting ruin. Our business now is with the sober and decent members of society, who may be just, and honest, and useful in their places ; and whose diligence and industry recommend them to their fellow creatures. We are willing to give due honour to such characters ; but must be permitted to urge upon them, in the most serious and solemn manner, the great danger of everlasting ruin and perdition by the love of the world ;—a thing not less ruinous and destructive to the souls of men, than the most flagrant and disgraceful vices.

For this alarming assertion we have no less authority than that of St. John—" Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world : if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John ii. 15. Let it also be remembered what it was that excluded the numerous persons invited to the Gospel feast, Luke xiv. 16 ; it was the love of the world ; it was the undue love of lawful things—" they all began to make excuse," and all their excuses were their care and trouble about many things, to the neglect of the one thing needful. But the master of the feast protested—" None of those men which were



bidden shall taste of my supper." In like manner, a very promising young gentleman, who addressed our Lord with great respect, and proposed to become one of his disciples, was for ever separated from him by the love of the world; he left him very sorrowful, for he was very rich. But we must proceed in the last place, to shew that,

3. Truly religious persons possess a portion which they shall never lose. "*Mary*," said our Lord, "*hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her.*" The part which she chose was to sit at the feet of Jesus, and receive in faith his divine instructions. This was a good part, the advantage of which she never lost. The reputation which Martha acquired as a generous hostess was soon gone; but Mary's honour continues to this moment.

In like manner a truly religious person, one who is renewed by the Spirit of God, is a humble learner at the feet of Christ, who still teaches his Church by his word and Spirit; one who accepts the Lord's gracious invitation "Learn of me"—be my scholar, be my disciple; become wise to salvation by my sacred Gospel: for "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The Gospel presents to the enlightened mind a part, or portion, which the soul deliberately chuses in preference to the whole world. An interest in Christ and union to him enriches the soul with all the infinite blessings of grace and glory. The complete pardon of sin—the perfect justification and acceptance of his person—the unspeakable felicity of peace with God—the most cordial reception into his dear family—the most friendly intercourse and communion with him—the consolations of his Holy Spirit—and certain protection from final apostacy—are among the invaluable privileges of a believer in the present world, and surely they deserve the title of the good part; but even these, good and great as they are, are comparatively small, when we take a glance by faith into the unseen and eternal world. Who can tell what is reserved in heaven, as yet unrevealed, for the heirs of glory? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Those who have now a part with Christ in his grace, shall have a part with Christ in his glory; those who are par-

takers with Christ in his sufferings, shall be partakers with him in his joys and honours to all eternity.

This then is the good part, intrinsically good, eminently good; and what renders it incomparably good is, its duration; it shall not be taken away. This is more than we can say of any earthly possession. Whatever good it may be, it partakes of that vanity and uncertainty which is inseparable from the present state of things. Pleasures perish in the using. Honour is a momentary bubble. Riches make themselves wings and fly away. Life itself is a transient vapour. What then is durable? Nothing, nothing but this good part. This shall abide, when the earth itself is dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat. It shall not be taken away. God, who bestowed it, will not take it away, for his gifts and callings are without repentance: wicked men, though they should be permitted to persecute, cannot take it away. Satan, with all his wiles and devices shall not take it away. No; we are persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor devils, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In this discourse, religion is brought to a point. Here is nothing to distract your attention. Here is a weighty sentence, uttered by the lips of eternal wisdom—*One thing is needful*—one thing, observe; and that one thing is religion, or the care of the soul.

So Jesus Christ says. What do *you* say? Are you of his mind? do you coincide with him, or totally differ? Say now, honestly,—Is religion the one thing needful with you? Is it so in your settled judgment? Is it so in your daily practice? Or is it quite the reverse? Not the *one* thing? Not *any* thing. Not at all the object of serious attention, of desire, of delight. How *many* things engage your thoughts, and divide your affections! But you cannot say they shall not be taken away from you. Even now, they cannot satisfy you. What will they do for you in the hour of death? You know they must fail you then, if not before. O be wise! Be wise now. Defer not a concern so great, so vast, so important. Your eternal happiness

perhaps depends on the decision which your mind shall form this moment. God help you to choose aright ! You may never have a clearer or stronger conviction than you have at this moment, that religion is the all-important concern. May divine grace enable you to say—By the help of God, this is the good part which I solemnly choose. Too long I have basely neglected it, but henceforth it shall be my business, my delight, my portion. Heaven and earth say—Amen !

Who can look abroad into the vain and wicked world without an aching heart ? How few are there who account religion the one thing needful ! How many are there with whom it is *the one thing needless* ; the only thing neglected and despised ! But let us take pains to rouse the attention of thoughtless mortals to this great concern. They must regard it or perish. Have we a relation or a friend living without God in the world ? O let us tell him, by some means or other, that one thing is needful, that Jesus Christ says so ; that all good men say so ; that even bad men when they come to die say so too. O that we might be the happy instruments of turning him to righteousness.

What a shield does this text afford us, against all the arrows of censure and ridicule that a vain and thoughtless world may hurl against us ! Let them call our serious regard to religion fanaticism ; let them treat us as enthusiasts or madmen. It is of no consequence at all. We know that *we* are right, and *they* are wrong. We will never blush at the charge of being religious, while the glorious teacher and judge of the world is on our side, and says—One thing is needful.

Have we chosen the good part ? Who hath made us to differ from those who reject it ? This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. To sovereign, distinguishing, almighty grace, be all the glory and all the praise ! We give him the glory ; he permits us to take the joy. And have I indeed chosen the good part ? and shall it never be taken away ? Is all safe for eternity ? Is Jesus mine, and heaven mine ? O Christian, happy art thou. Envy not the gayest and the richest of the world ; be content with thy better portion, rejoice ; be thankful ; and live to God.

## SERMON LVIII.

### RELIGION OR RUIN.

Ezek. xviii. 30. .... *So Iniquity shall not be your Ruin.*

**I**F we believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, we are bound to take our estimate of every religious subject from them ; and in doing so, we shall find a wonderful difference between the doctrines of God and the opinions of men. This difference will appear in a most striking manner on the subject of SIN: the representations which are made of it in the Bible are totally different from those which are made of it by sinners themselves. It is common for the latter to think and speak of sin as a light and trifling affair ; it gives them no concern ; it excites no alarm ; they seek no remedy ; but can make plausible excuses for it, turn it into a jest, and even glory in their shame. But if we consult the word of God, we should find that sin is the worst of all evils ; that it is extremely hateful to our Maker ; extremely prejudicial to ourselves ; that it is the dreadful source of all the miseries we feel, and the procuring cause of sufferings unspeakable and eternal in the world to come. Look at sin in the flattering mirror that Satan and the world present to us, and it assumes the appearance of bewitching pleasure, freedom and advantage ; but survey it in the faithful glass of the divine truth, and you behold an object deformed and loathsome ; vile and base in itself, and full of unspeakable danger and mischief to the sinner. The text describes its tendency in one comprehensive word—**RUIN**—a word of tremendous import, even when applied to worldly concerns ; it is to subvert, demolish, impoverish, and utterly destroy ; applied to the soul, it is to *demolish* the image of God ; it is to become miserably poor ; it is to destroy all true happiness ; and to insure a long eternity of inconceivable sorrows and sufferings.

But the text also opens to us a door of hope ; while it points out the ruinous effect of sin, it offers the most gracious advice in order to our avoiding it ; and this is the



principal design of the Gospel; it is good news; information how we may be delivered from eternal misery, and made partakers of everlasting life. There are two things therefore which now call for our serious attention.

1. Sin is certainly ruinous to the souls of men; and,
2. The Gospel directs us how to avoid the impending ruin.

We are first to prove, that "*Sin is certainly ruinous to the souls of men.*" "The wages of sin is death.—When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." By sin, we mean, any want of conformity to the law of God, or any transgression of it; not coming up to what it requires, or doing any thing that it forbids. God has an undoubted right to our obedience; he made us; he gave us all the powers we possess; he preserves us and provides for us, and bestows innumerable comforts upon us. How reasonable then is it that we should obey his will, abstain from what would hurt us, and do the things which are pleasing and acceptable in his sight! But such is the perverseness of our hearts, that we refuse to do this. We set up our own carnal will as our law; and practically say, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us"—"As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee: but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth." "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?"

This is the daring language, this is the provoking practice of men in general. But is it not awfully criminal? Can we reasonably suppose that a God of unspotted holiness and purity will endure such conduct? Would the rulers of this world permit their subjects to disobey their laws with impunity? No: every human law has its proper *sanction*, or it would be merely a piece of advice and not a law; and if the law be broken, punishment follows of course.

Even in private life, those very persons who flatter themselves that God will not punish their sins, are frequently disposed severely to resent the little injuries done to themselves. The parent thinks it right to keep his child in subjection, and sometimes punish him for a fault. He is extremely angry with a negligent and undutiful ser-

vant, and perhaps dismisses him for a single failure in duty. If he be deceived and defrauded by a neighbour, he will withdraw his favours from him; and perhaps prosecute a thief even unto death, for the loss of a few shillings. A gentleman, who piques himself upon his nice sense of honour, will probably kill his friend in a duel to obtain satisfaction: and yet, O strange inconsistency! these very persons will deny that the God of infinite justice means to take any notice of the numberless offences they have committed against him for many years together.

In human governments, when there is a conspiracy against the king or the state, the culprits are diligently sought for, and when convicted, are punished with exemplary severity; and it is necessary it should be so: but is rebellion against heaven the only innocent rebellion? It is a crime of the greatest magnitude to aim at dethroning an earthly monarch, and is it no harm to live a life of open rebellion against God; violating his laws, opposing his authority, submitting to another prince, and, as far as the sinner can, aiming to dethrone the eternal majesty?

The rebellion of a child against a parent is still more vile, as in the case of Absalom, who would have dethroned and murdered his indulgent father David. But this is a crime justly chargeable upon every sinner. Harken to the indictment in the words of God himself. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!" This crime, I say, is justly chargeable on each of us; we have united the ingratitude of an undutiful child with the rebellion of a wicked subject; we have despised the laws of God; (some have taken pains to prove, they are not his laws, but all fables and forgeries;) we have denied that God requires any submission; we have obeyed another prince, an usurper, even "the prince of the power of the air, which now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience."

And shall we yet say, what harm have I done? We have insulted the God of heaven: we have abused his justice, as if he would not punish sin; we have abused his power, as if he could not punish it; we have abused his omniscience, as if he did not see our sin; we have abused

his truth, as if he would belie himself; and we have abused his patience, which has borne so long with us; and shall we abuse him still further, by saying that all the following threatenings mean nothing at all?

Observe what he says. "*The soul that sinneth it shall die.*" (Ezek. xviii. 4.) "*The wicked shall be turned into hell.*" (Psalm ix. 17.) "*Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.*" (James i. 15.) "*Fear him, who is able to cast both body and soul into hell;*"—"Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." (Matt. x. 28.) "*Every transgression and disobedience receiveth a just recompense of reward.*" (Heb. ii. 2.) "*He will render indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil*" (Rom. ii. 8, 9.) Now, are all these dreadful threatenings nothing? Do they not prove that sin is certainly ruinous to the souls of men?

But as *general* threatenings do not affect so much as those *particular* ones which are denounced against particular sins, observe the following. What saith a holy God against the unclean sinner?—"Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge;" (Heb. xiii. 4.) and again, "*Whoso committeth adultery destroyeth his own soul.*" (Prov. vi. 32.) What saith God to the drunkard? "*Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? They that tarry long at the wine, &c.—at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.*" (Prov. xxiii. 32.) What saith he to the swearer? "*God will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*" (Exod. xx. 7.) The like may be said of every one who lives in any other known sin; they are ruining themselves—they are *heaping up wrath against the day of wrath*; like a man building a pile on which to burn himself to death; every time a man commits a new sin, he is bringing another faggot to enlarge the heap and increase the flame.

Sin has already ruined its thousands and its millions. When sin got into heaven, it ruined multitudes of the angels, and pulled them down from their thrones into endless perdition. Sin ruined our first parents, and dragged them out of paradise into a wilderness of woe. Sin ruined the world of the ungodly, and brought a destructive deluge of wrath upon them all. Sin ruined Sodom and

Gomorrah, and brought down showers of fire and brimstone upon them. Sin ruined the nation of Israel, by bringing Philistines and Assyrians upon them; and when they filled up the measure of their iniquity by the murder of the Son of God, it completely ruined them, both in church and state, and dispersed them among all nations a standing monument of the ruinous nature of sin!

And, O! could we draw aside the veil, which conceals from our view the dire abode of damned spirits, where God's mercies are clean gone, and he will be favourable no more, what a terrific proof should we have of the truth of our text; one and all would say, "We are filled with the fruit of our own ways; we are reaping the wages of our own sins: O mortals, sin is indeed a ruinous thing!"

Yes! while we are sitting here at our ease, and calmly contemplating the evil of sin, they are shrieking aloud with insufferable torture; living, ever-living witnesses of its awful evil. Methinks I hear one of them say, "Ah, indeed; sin has proved my ruin. Sabbath-breaking ruined me. I indulged my sloth—I kept open my shop for the paltry gain of a few shillings—I would have my pleasant walks and rides and company—I deserted the house of God, neglected the salvation of my soul; and now I am ruined for ever."

Another cries, "Sensuality has destroyed me. My heart was full of uncleanness. I doted on the embraces of an harlot. I sacrificed, for the delights of a moment, the pleasures of an eternal world; and find by woeful experience, that "her house is the way to death, her steps take hold on hell!"

Methinks the doleful lamentation of a third, is to this effect. "I was a lover of that wretched world. Gold was my God. I would be rich at all events. I would have customers, and friends, and business at any rate: I succeeded. I got a good trade, but I lost a good God. I got friends, but made Christ my enemy. I obtained money, but ruined my soul!" O sirs! there is not a miserable man or woman in hell who does not say—"Sin has been my ruin!"

Well then: will you take warning by their ruin, so as to avoid the same? Has not sin ruined souls enough al-



ready? Must *you*, who know all this, be added to the dreadful number? God forbid! O that there were an heart in you to say—"I see, I plainly see, that sin is a ruinous thing. It is of God's infinite mercy that it has not destroyed me long ago; and now I desire to forsake it: I desire to fly from the wrath to come: but whither must I fly? What must I do to escape this threatening ruin?"

To answer this important inquiry shall be our next business; for we proposed to show, in the second place, that,

2. The Gospel directs us how to avoid the impending ruin.

I say—The *Gospel* directs how to avoid it; and nothing but the Gospel *can* do this. The light of nature could never have informed us upon what terms an offended God would be merciful, or whether he would be merciful at all. The law of God can do us good only by convincing and alarming our consciences, and exciting in us an earnest desire to flee from approaching wrath. But in this most interesting concern, the Gospel of Christ offers us the fullest satisfaction; and tells us, in three words, what must be done that iniquity may not prove our ruin. We must "*believe*"—We must "*repent*"—We must "*lead a new life*."

1. We shall begin with "*faith*;" faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. It was thus that St. Paul began with the trembling jailor at Philippi; when, apprehensive of immediate ruin, he cried aloud, in the consternation of his soul—"What must I do to be saved?" The servant of God directed his views to the only refuge for a sinner, even to Jesus, that benevolent friend of sinners, who came "to seek and to save that which was lost."

It was to prevent our everlasting ruin that God sent his Son into the world; it was, "that they who believe in him, should not *perish*," as they must have done without him, "but have everlasting life."

Turn your eyes then to Jesus! see him descending from the bright abode of glory; making himself of no reputation; taking upon himself the form of a servant; being made in the likeness of men: see him humbling him-

self, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! Think of the poverty, the pain, the sorrow, the contempt, he bore on earth. Behold him in the garden of Gethsemane, lying on the cold ground; pouring out strong cries and tears; and, in the inconceivable agony of his oppressed soul, sweating great drops of blood! Follow the patient sufferer to the unjust tribunals of Caiaphas Herod, and Pilate; falsely accused by his malicious enemies, abandoned by his dearest friends, and sentenced to an ignominious punishment. "Behold the man!" crowned with piercing thorns, and torn with cruel scourges. See him bearing the heavy cross along the dolorous way, to the place of common execution. See him stript in the sight of a barbarous multitude; stretched as on a rack; affixed to the cross with spikes; and lifted up, a piteous spectacle, the object of public scorn and derision! Observe the ghastly paleness of death overspreading his sacred face. He dies! the friend of sinners dies! but not till he cried aloud—"It is finished!" Yes, "he finished transgression, made an end of sins, and brought in everlasting righteousness."

You then, who desire that sin may not be your ruin, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Believe that "he is able to save to the uttermost," able to save *you*! "His blood cleanseth from all sin;" and saves from ruin every helpless creature that come to him for life. Come to him then as your Saviour. Cast your soul upon him, "so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

2. *Repentance*, throughout the Scriptures, always represented as necessary to salvation; not indeed, as the meritorious cause or condition of pardon; but as that disposition of mind which becomes a guilty sinner; which gives glory to God, and renders the deliverance from ruin unspeakably suitable and precious. Indeed, "repentance is a tear dropped from the eye of faith;" and who can behold the Saviour bleeding and dying for him, without confessing, lamenting, and forsaking the sins which occasioned his death?

Repentance is that reasonable service to which the Lord is, in our text, exhorting the children of Israel: "*Repent,*

*and turn yourselves from all your transgressions ; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."* Our Saviour himself insisted upon repentance, saying, " Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish ;" and all the apostles went out and preached that men should repent.

There is so much pride and ignorance in the hearts of sinners, that, without the special grace of God, they are strongly inclined to conceal or excuse their sins. Some intirely deny them, and say " they have done no harm ;" others justify themselves by putting their good deeds in the opposite scale ; others invent excuses for their sins ; and, instead of blaming themselves as they ought to do, lay the fault on their situations, connexions, and temptations : the greater part add to their sins by attempting to lessen them ; and gloss over the vilest iniquities by soft and favourable names ; as being " a little free," " a little gay," " a little wild," &c. ; and boasting, notwithstanding all their vices, that they mean well, and have a good heart.

But the penitent soul, who dreads the deserved ruin due to his sins, will " not disemble nor cloke them before the face of Almighty God ; but confess them with an humble, penitent, and obedient heart:" he will be far, very far, from boasting of his integrity, his good heart, or his good works : he will discover godly sorrow, grief and shame ; and will abhor himself, as the vilest of the vile, repenting in dust and ashes. To such a person will the God of mercy look with a compassionate eye, for " he is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Yes ; we are authorized to say to the humble penitent—" Iniquity shall not be thy ruin." " Go thy way, and sin no more."

3. It is necessary that the believing and penitent sinner, who sincerely desires to escape from the wrath to come, should *lead a new life* : I say it is necessary, and God requires that he should *lead a new life*. The verse after our text give this direction to Israel of old—" *Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit : for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?*" ver. 31. These expressions do not suppose a natural or an inherent power in the sinner to effect this ; for it is most certain that " without

Christ we can do nothing ;” and we find that what is here directed to be done, as a matter of *duty*, is elsewhere proposed in a way of *promise* : (see chap. xi. 19.) but, by the grace of God, accompanying the exhortations of his word, they become effectual to the sinner’s conversion ; and, as Austin well explains the precept, “ God does not command impossibilities : but by commanding, he admonishes us to do what is in our power, and to pray for that which is not.”

We can have no sufficient evidence that sin will not be our ruin, until sin becomes our burden ; until it be the object of our sincere aversion and hatred ; until we renounce the sinful delights of the world, and choose the things we once abhorred. The very bent and disposition of the heart must be altered ; turned from sin to holiness, from vanity to godliness, from the creature to the Creator, from earth to heaven. O what a great and glorious change is this, and the very seal of God to this animating message—“ So iniquity shall not be your ruin !”

Thus, men and brethren, we have endeavoured to prove the truth of the title which we prefixed to this discourse—RELIGION OR RUIN : and have we not made it out ? Is it not sufficiently plain from the word of truth, that there are but two things to choose—Serious evangelical religion—or everlasting ruin ? There are but two different roads to choose—The broad one that leads to destruction, or the narrow one that leads to life ; and in the one or the other of these, each of us is now travelling.

And does the person who reads or hears this discourse, believe it is so ? What then is *thy* choice, my fellow sinner ? Religion or ruin ?—Sin and death, or, grace and life ? Both are now set before you. Which do you prefer ? O dismiss not the subject, till you make a decision. Perhaps it may never be put to you in the same manner any more. It may be the last time of offering. And O how much depends on the choice ! May Almighty God help you to make it, and keep to it. “ So shall iniquity not be your ruin.”

I would most gladly impress on your mind this solemn truth—*Sin is a ruinous thing*. It ruins men, because they do not believe it is ruinous, It may be, you have never



yet seen it in this light. You say—"Sin is so pleasant; how can it be ruinous?" I admit that sin is pleasant. There certainly are pleasures in sin: but there are pains too. And a life of sin is not half so pleasant as a life of religion. Ask those who have tried both. How often, even in the present world, does sin procure ruin? How many a promising youth has it ruined:—ruined his health—ruined his character—ruined his family! How many has sin brought to an hospital, to a work-house, to Newgate, to the gallows! to the grave!

You will not believe the ruin because you do not *see* it, but when seen it will be too late to escape. In other cases of threatened danger, you give credit to the testimony of a friend, perhaps of a stranger. If I solemnly and affectionately say to a traveller—"My good sir? venture not through that water which overflows the road; it is deep; it is dangerous; and two men have been drowned there this morning;" you would pause and ponder; and not hastily rush into ruin. If I say to another, "Proceed no further on the road this evening; a desperate gang of thieves lie in wait at such a spot, and several persons have already been robbed," regard to your property and your life would make you listen to the warning, though it might oppose your inclination and your convenience. If credible merchants assure you that a city, which you wish to visit, upon business or pleasure, is, at this time, ravaged by the plague or yellow fever; you will carefully avoid the contagious spot, and be thankful for the important though unwelcome information. Why then, should not sin, ruinous sin, be shunned? Sin! which is far more dangerous and destructive than water, or thieves, or fever; and the testimony given concerning its danger far more weighty and powerful than that of the most credible mortals; for it is the testimony of the God of truth himself, who cannot lie, and will not deceive.

Believe then the testimony of God, both concerning the ruin and the remedy. How gracious is it in him to give you warning! This destruction may yet be avoided. This is his benevolent language. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help." To save sinners from ruin, Christ hath died; the Gospel is sent to

you, inviting you to come to him and find safety; ministers are employed to reason with you, to prevent your ruin; the Bible is put into your hands on purpose to direct you to a refuge. Conscience whispers in your ear—"Religion is, after all, the safest course." Will you then resist all this evidence? reject all these monitors? Is God merciful to you, and will you be unmerciful to yourself? Are you so in love with ruin, that you will not be persuaded to avoid it? What can be so reasonable as an immediate application to Christ for help? What folly and madness can be equal to a neglect of the means of security? All things are ready. Come then to Jesus, for "there is no condemnation to them that are in him, who walk, not after the flesh but after the Spirit." His precious, saving "name" is a strong tower. the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." "*So shall iniquity not be your ruin.*" Amen and amen!

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## SERMON LIX.

### LOT'S DELIVERANCE.

*Genesis xix. 24, 25, 26.....Then the LORD rained upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven: and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.*

THE apostle Jude, exhorting Christians to constancy in the faith, reminds them of the terrible judgments of God upon fallen angels—upon his people Israel—and upon the inhabitants of Sodom. Of the latter, he thus speaks, ver. 7. "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Examples of this kind are not for imitation, but for caution, for warning, for admonition; that all sinners, in all ages, may avoid the destruction, by avoiding the sin.

The history before us is of a very affecting, yet of a ve-

re instructive kind, to which we shall do well to give the most serious attention. We shall arrange the most striking circumstances of it under the three following heads.

1. The destruction of Sodom ;
2. The deliverance of Lot ; and,
3. The apostacy of his wife.

The destruction of Sodom and some neighbouring cities, was occasioned by their extreme wickedness. "The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly ;" Gen. xiii. 13. The country in which they lived was remarkably beautiful and fertile, "it was well watered every where, even as the garden of the Lord," described in the second chapter of this book ; and much resembled some of the finest parts of Egypt. Prosperity, however, without grace, is a dangerous snare to the soul. The goodness of God should have led them to repentance and obedience ; but, on the contrary, "this was the iniquity of Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness." (Ezek. xvi. 49.) Their plenty only pampered their bodies, and became fuel to their lusts ; while abundance of idleness furnished them with those opportunities of indulgence, which honest industry would have prevented. They were uncommonly and outrageously wicked ; they gave themselves up to fornication, and to still more vile affections : instead of being ashamed of their sins ; they proclaimed them openly, and gloried in their shame. Neither was this the horrid depravity of a few individuals ; it was general ; it was almost universal ; there were not ten persons in it, including the family of Lot, who were free from the dreadful contagion.

These sins are said (ver. 20.) to cry—"The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great." Atrocious sins cry to God for vengeance ; they demand a period to that patience which has borne with them so long ; they require that the earth should be cleared from such monsters of iniquity ; and that a holy God should rise, and manifest his just indignation against them.

God, who is slow to anger, at length arose to judgment. He first revealed his design to Abraham, who lived a few miles off, and who interceded in the most earnest manner for them ; and had there been but ten righteous men in

Sodom, it would have been spared for their sakes; such is the gracious regard which God bears to those who fear him. The angels, who were appointed to be the executioners of divine wrath, entered Sodom in the evening; and, appearing as human travellers, were gladly welcomed to the hospitable abode of Lot. There they soon had ocular proof of the dreadful depravity, impudence, and violence of the people. Lot, who reproved them for their conduct, was insulted, and exposed to imminent danger, and was rescued from their violent hands only by the supernatural interference of the angels, who smote the clamorous mob with blindness.

Immediate ruin had then become inevitable: and no respite would be allowed but that which was necessary for the safety of Lot.

Early in the morning, probably at day-break, this good man, his wife, and daughters, were obliged, by a gracious violence, to leave the city, and betake themselves to a place of refuge. When this was effected, and Lot was safe in Zoar—"Then," says our text, "*Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven.*"

How sudden and unexpected was this calamity! "The sun was risen upon the earth." As yet, many who had been revelling in the night, were fast asleep in their beds. Others were rising to pursue the business or enjoy the pleasures of the day. Even they who had been warned of the danger were perfectly secure. "Peace and safety" was their cry, when, alas! sudden destruction was just at hand. Our Saviour refers to this (Luke xvii. 28.)—"They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all." They were surprised with the ruin which they would not fear; and indeed, thus it is with sinners in general, even with those who die on their beds; the most awful warnings excite no alarm, men perceive no danger, and death itself strikes the fatal blow in an unexpected moment.

How peculiar, and how tremendous was this destruction! A deluge of water was once the instrument of divine vengeance, overwhelming a guilty world; but who



ever heard of a deluge of fire? All the elements are at the disposal of their Maker, whether for the purposes of wrath or of mercy. Now, indeed, was "the wrath of God revealed *from heaven!*" The expression is singular—"The LORD rained"—"from the LORD"—The LORD, the Son, from the LORD, the Father, as some interpret the words; at least it means that JEHOVAH himself sent down this fiery shower; it was his own supernatural act, and not the effect of ordinary causes. Doubtless it was a method of destruction most singular and most dreadful: alluding to this, the psalmist says, "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." The consternation of this awful hour was, probably, enhanced by the most vivid and frequent flashes of lightning; by tremendous peals of thunder; and by repeated shocks of earthquake. Ah! who can describe, or even conceive, what terror and dismay seized every guilty heart, when this universal desolation overwhelmed them; and when these sulphureous flames on earth were about to convey them to everlasting burnings, to "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever."

Thus were the numerous inhabitants of five populous cities, and perhaps a greater number of villages, at once consumed, and blotted out from the land of the living! Thus were many thousands of guilty rebels hurried away, by the most awful kind of death, to suffer "the vengeance of eternal fire."

The country itself, once a terrestrial paradise, became the durable monument of this awful event—"it is brimstone, and salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth thereon;" (Deut. xxix. 23.) The scene of this desolation is now called the *Dead Sea*, because, say some, no animal lives in it. According to Josephus it is about seventy miles in length, and about twenty in breadth; the ruins of Sodom were formerly visible; and a peculiar substance called bitumen, or asphaltus, is yet found in it.

But let us turn, in the *second* place, to a more pleasing part of the subject, THE DELIVERANCE OF LOT—"righteous Lot," as the Scripture calls him.

Lot, having been educated by Abraham, the father of the faithful, was no doubt fully instructed in the knowledge of God: nor did he receive this instruction in vain. It is a great privilege for young people to dwell in a pious house, and enjoy the prayers and the example of a believing relative. Some, indeed, despise this advantage; but many, like Lot, will have cause eternally to be thankful for it.

In consequence, however, of the great increase of his worldly substance, he separates from his uncle, and chuses for his residence the fertile meadows of Sodom. In this choice he seems to have been influenced by motives too worldly and carnal. Here, indeed, his wealth increased for a time; but ere long, a war breaking out in the country, Sodom was seized and plundered by the enemy, his flocks and herds removed, and himself taken prisoner. By the gallant behaviour of Abraham, however, he recovered his liberty and his property, and settled again in the same pleasant, but ungodly spot.

In this horribly wicked place, he was enabled to maintain his integrity, to keep himself free from the vices of his neighbours, and conduct himself as became a worshipper of Jehovah. But he was far from being happy. He could not be an unconcerned spectator of the enormous wickedness of the inhabitants. St. Peter says, "He was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds." It was much to his honour that he felt this abhorrence of sin; but he must feel reproved continually, for fixing his residence in such an abandoned place.

It is the unavoidable lot of some, to dwell among the profane; and happy are they who can withstand the torrent of sin; who have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but," like Lot, "reprove them." Yet, let every one who values the salvation of his soul, avoid, if possible, such a dangerous situation; for no worldly gain can compensate for the evil to which it exposes him; and few, too few, like Lot, preserve themselves untainted from the general pollution. "They who will be rich," even at the hazard of their souls, too frequently "fall into temp-

tation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition ; they err from the faith, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows," This consideration should be duly weighed by parents, in their choice of schools for the education of their children, and in placing them abroad in the world for business : it should weigh with servants in the choice of their situations (as far as choice is practicable to them ;) it should render persons of every description cautious in the selection of their companions, especially in the choice of a companion for life ; and indeed, in every step of their affairs : for many venture, like Lot, into a Sodom, but few, like him, escape unhurt. Every one has not Lot's fortitude ; every one has not an Abraham to pray for him.

The hospitality of Lot in entertaining the illustrious strangers, is recommended to our imitation ; for he "entertained angels unawares." By them he was informed of the destruction which they were commissioned to execute upon Sodom and its inhabitants. "We will destroy this place," said they, "because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord ; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." But he was permitted, and advised, to give immediate warning to his relations. In the course of the night he repairs to their habitations, though probably with great peril to his own person : he calls them up ; he warns them as a prophet ; he intreats them as a parent. "Up," said he, "get ye out of this place ; for the Lord will destroy this city." But his sons-in-law rejected the warning with disdain. "He seemed as one that mocked unto them." They had been used to jesting, and they treated this as a jest. "Why should to-morrow differ from other days ? Who ever saw it rain fire ? Or whence should that brimstone come ?" "Thus," saith Bishop Hall, "to carnal men, preaching is foolishness ; devotion idleness ; the prophets madmen ; Paul a babbler. These men's incredulity is as worthy of the fire, as the other's uncleanness. *He that believeth not is condemned already.*"

But now, the moment of danger is at hand. No time must be lost. The angels *hasten* Lot, saying, "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters which are here ; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city." But alas !

even Lot himself *lingered*. Who can conceive the agitation and distress of his mind, on leaving all his property to be destroyed, and his married daughters to be burnt to death! No wonder that he lingered; but “the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two unmarried daughters,—*the Lord being merciful unto him*, and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.”

O how often do persons under convictions of sin and danger *linger*! They are satisfied that they ought to separate themselves from the wicked world, and immediately fly from the wrath to come; but they still delay; they are unwilling to leave their connexions; to forsake all and follow Christ. Nor is the case decided, till the Lord exert his constraining power and grace, and, as it were, by a holy violence, “pluck them as brands out of the fire.”

Being now brought out of the city, the angels who were to destroy it take their leave, but with this advice, given with a most gracious vehemence—“Escape for thy life;—look not behind thee—neither stay thou in all the plain—Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.” ver. 17. It is in this manner that sinners are warmly exhorted by the word of God, to come forth from the spiritual Sodom, from their state of sin and danger. “Knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade men.” We would “save them with fear, pulling them out of the fire,” It is for your lives! Escape, or perish! Repent, or perish! Be converted, or perish!

The Lord was pleased to direct Lot whither to fly for refuge. “Escape to the mountain.” As the whole valley was devoted to destruction, the distant hills were appointed as a place of safety. But Lot, aged, wearied, and frightened, probably thinking his strength insufficient to reach one of them, requested leave to retire to a small town that was nearer. “Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one. O let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?)” This was his infirmity; for God who had brought him out, and directed him to the mountain, was surely able to strengthen him to reach it. It is dangerous to chuse for ourselves, and so the sequel of the story proves; for though his request was granted, and Zoar spa-



red for his sake, yet it appears that he was afterwards obliged to leave it, and dwell in a lonely cave ; where, alas ! he was tempted to a great sin. How much better then would it have been at once to obey the heavenly order, and take refuge in the appointed mountain : thither God would have graciously conducted him, and there doubtless he would have been safe.

When a sinner forsakes his evil ways, the Gospel directs him to Christ as the only refuge, the only “ deliverer from divine wrath.” But how many are disposed to tarry in the plain ? to rest in reformation and morality merely ; or to resort to some other shelter of their own devising. Never should a sinner rest, till, by faith, he hath fled to Jesus, “ the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world ;” till Jesus is made to him, “ wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” Then he is safe.

Lot, his wife, and daughters, being delivered from Sodom, and on their way to Zoar, all seemed to be well. Lot, no doubt, remembered the divine injunction—“ *Look not behind thee.*” God’s law, in the least command, as well as in the greatest, is holy, and just, and good : he had wise reasons for this prohibition. Lot must not look back ; for it would argue his unwillingness to leave Sodom and his possessions there ; it might intimate his doubt whether the threatening would be accomplished ; at any rate it would occasion some delay ; he therefore obeys, proceeds, and at length gains the wish’d-for asylum. Not so his wife : she looks back, and perishes : and this is the

*Third* particular, which remains to be considered ; THE APOSTACY OF LOT’S WIFE. “ She looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.”

That this very singular and very awful circumstance deserves particular consideration, is evident from the use which our Lord makes of it, Luke xvii. 32, where he says to his disciples, “ *Remember Lot’s wife !*”

In the flight of the family, it is probable that Lot, more fully convinced of the approaching danger than the rest, took the lead. His wife, not sufficiently attentive to the strict prohibition, “ *Look not behind,*” was inclined, by some motive or other, to stop ; to turn round, and gaze upon the

devoted city. Perhaps a trifler will say, and what great harm was there in that? I answer, much every way. It was an act of *disobedience*; and disobedience is the very essence of sin. It was a contempt of the divine authority, which is equally to be regarded, in those things which may seem to us small, as well as in those which are apparently great. Her sin was aggravated by her *ingratitude*. It was losing sight of the great goodness of God, in delivering the family, and distinguishing them from the thousands about to perish. God resents with peculiar indignation this brutish disregard of his singular mercies.

Probably there was a mixture of *unbelief* in her offence. She turned and stopped to see whether the threatened danger was likely to ensue or not. So, many persons among ourselves, will believe nothing but what they can see or account for; let them remember Lot's wife.

But *love of the world* was doubtless her principal sin. She felt a strong attachment to the place, to the people, and to her worldly substance, now left behind; and perhaps entertained a hope that the destruction would not take place, and that she might yet return to the beloved spot.

Indulging these sinful thoughts and affections, she stood, gazing on the city, as yet in prospect, till the horrible storm overtook her. Struck dead probably, by a flash of lightning, she was miraculously kept erect, and soon incrustated by a shower of that nitro-sulphureous matter, which desolated the whole country. She became a pillar of salt, and there remained, as we learn, not only from Scripture, but from several ancient and credible historians, a standing monument, for many ages, of the divine wrath against apostacy.

What must have been the terror of righteous Lot, when he entered Zoar, and missed the partner of his life. Anxious fears for her safety would immediately arise in his heart. When the dreadful storm had subsided, he would doubtless go in search of her; but who can conceive of his astonishment and grief, when he found her transformed into a rock of salt! What an awful addition was this to the loss of all his property, and of his two children, who had perished in the flames! Such, though his life was spared, were the dreadful effects of his worldly-

mindfulness in settling among the abominable criminals of this country.

And now what remains, but that we select, and fix deeply on our hearts, some of the important lessons which this awful history is intended to teach us.

Surely we must be struck, in the first place, with the extreme depravity of human nature, and the dreadful lengths to which it may proceed, unless restrained by the power of God. We look with just concern on the guilty cities of the plain; but are there not with us, even with us, sins, and crying sins too, against the Lord. Even the sins of Sodom are committed in England; yea, it may be said to people called Christians, "Sodom hath not done as thou hast done!" Far greater are our privileges than Sodom ever possessed, and our sins are consequently more aggravated than theirs. May we not then fear a just punishment? God is now, and always the hater of sin; and though a punishment like Sodom's may not fall upon us in this world, yet he who is to be our Judge, hath said, and he says it to us as much as to the Jews—"It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment," than for those who hear the Gospel, but reject its evidences, and neglect its salvation.

Hear then, O sinner, the warning voice of the Gospel, before the storm of wrath comes down. Escape for thy life—Look not behind thee—Tarry not in all the plain—Escape to the mountain—flee to the Friend of sinners, who will grant thee refuge, pardon, grace, and eternal life.

What an awful lesson is here against apostacy! O let the Saviour's caution resound in our ears—"Remember Lot's wife!" Yes! let us remember her, so as not to imitate her. If you have turned your backs upon the world, then give it up altogether. Will you regret the loss of that company, of those amusements, or even of that property, which would have ruined your soul for ever? God forbid! Be thankful, and remember St. Paul. Say with him, "Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." To him be all honour and glory, world without end, Amen.

## SERMON LX.

IRRESOLUTION REPROVED, AND DECISION RECOMMENDED.

1 Kings xviii. 21.....*And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, how long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal then follow him.*

**I**N various periods of human life, and particularly in youth, there is a remarkable hesitation as to the choice a person shall make. On the one hand, religion demands his attention; sets before him the destructive consequences of sin, and the necessity of forsaking it; requires him to relinquish the bewitching vanities of the world, and offers him in their stead the pleasures of a good conscience, and an eternal weight of glory in the future world. But, nearer at hand, the smiling world presents her flattering joys; invites him immediately to taste her delights, and leave both the bitters and sweets of religion to another day.

Are there any here who thus hesitate?—"I have a message from God unto you:" the message which Elijah delivered to the tribes of Israel on a most solemn occasion, when hesitating whether to worship Jehovah or Baal. "How long halt ye between two opinions? If Jehovah be the true God, let him alone be worshipped: but, if Baal can prove his divinity, let him have your adoration."

After the death of Solomon, the kingdom was divided; two tribes only, beside that of Levi, adhered to the family of David, and these kept up the worship of Jehovah: the other ten tribes revolted under Jeroboam, and set up the idolatrous worship of Baal. The country of the latter was in extreme misery, having been punished with drought for more than three years. Elijah, a bold and zealous prophet of Jehovah, requests Ahab the king, one of Jeroboam's successors, to collect the people and the priests of Baal; which he did. He then makes a proposal. "Let them give us, said he, two bullocks—let them choose one for themselves, and give us the other. Let the priests of Baal prepare their beast for sacrifice, and lay it on wood; but put no fire under. I will do the same with the other



bullock. Let them then call on the name of their gods, and I will call upon the name of Jehovah, and the god that answereth by fire, let him be the god." This proposal was so fair, that no person objected. But in vain did the votaries of Baal pray, and cry for his interposition by fire from heaven; "there was no voice, nor any that answered." At length Elijah, having ordered a large quantity of water to be poured on his offering, to prevent the least suspicion of deceit, called upon Jehovah, saying, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day, that thou art God in Israel." Immediately, the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the whole sacrifice; when, the people being fully convinced, fell on their faces, and said, "The LORD he is God! the LORD he is God!" O that a decision equally happy may crown our present discourse! Some probably are hesitating—halting between two opinions; let me, in my humble measure, imitate the holy prophet, and expostulate with you, "How long halt ye? Why hesitate any longer? If the religion of Jesus be true and holy and good, why neglect to be seriously religious? If the way of sin and folly be safe and right; if God and conscience approve; and you are sure that it will end well—then pursue it without reserve."

I flatter myself that you will favour me with your serious attention to what I shall offer upon the two following observations.

1. Many persons, and young persons especially, are irresolute and changeable with respect to religion.

2. Such is the reality, pleasure, and advantage of true religion, and it desires and demands our whole hearts; and we ought not to hesitate a moment about giving them fully to it.

Let us first observe, (and who has not observed it?) that many persons seem to hesitate, and shew that they are irresolute and undetermined whether they shall be religious or not.

It must, I think, be admitted, that there is something in religion so solemn and so grand, that it can scarcely fail, if at all regarded, to affect and interest the human mind. When the glorious perfections of the Almighty Being are displayed; when the deformity, turpitude, and mischief of

sin are exposed ; when the wisdom and grace of the redemption of Christ are unfolded ; when the awful solemnities of death and judgment are described ; or, when the astonishing realities of heaven and hell are exhibited ; that heart must be hard, beyond the common degree of hardness, that does not feel a religious impression. The unhappy mortal accustomed to gross and brutal inattention, or the frivolous creature habituated to excessive levity, or the haughty rationalist who has been cheated into infidelity, may perhaps, contrive to resist the impression ; but it is with difficulty resisted, and if the darkness be preferred to the light, it is only because the opposer's deeds are evil.

Those persons who attend the house of God, especially those who hear a faithful and able preacher of the Gospel, can scarcely fail to be seriously impressed at times. To every such minister it may be said, as of old it was said to Ezekiel, "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument:"—they are surprised with the grandeur of his subjects, affected with the sublimity of his ideas, charmed with the elegance of his language—are as well pleased, almost, as at an oratorio or a play ; but this is all ; "for" it is added, "they hear thy words, but they do them not." This temporary affection is justly described by St. James—the mere hearer resembles "a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgotteth what manner of man he was."—The word of God is a faithful mirror: the *law* discovers our sinful spots; the *Gospel* displays the cleansing blood of Christ. Many a hearer catches a glance of his spots, but does not dwell on the deformity ; he goes his way ; returns to the vain and busy world, and forgets to apply to the purifying fountain ; it is only he who *attentively* looks into the Gospel, and *continueth* therein ; steadily regards and retains the truth ; it is only he that is "blessed in his deed."

When the word of God is seconded by some alarming and painful providence, deep impressions are sometimes felt. Sickness and solitude bring men to themselves. Affliction obliges them to withdraw from the busy and

gaudy scenes of temptation, and if conscience obtain leave to speak, it will plead in behalf of religion. It will accuse for past delay. It will urge to holy resolutions. If death enter the house and seize one of the family, O how awfully important does religion then appear, and how frequently are some vices abandoned, and some duties commenced! But the heart soon heals; the world regains its dominion, and the sinner hesitates as before.

It is the privilege of some young persons to have at hand the most faithful and the most affectionate of all preachers—a pious and indulgent parent. Wisely catching the favourable moment, he drops a serious hint on the worth of the soul, the uncertainty of life, the approach of death; he recommends, from the experience of years, the excellence of religion, and says that “the Saviour’s yoke is easy, and his burden light.” The youth, not yet hardened by the society of the vicious and the infidel, the tender female especially, heaves a sigh, or drops a tear in unison with that of the parent; perhaps almost wishes to be religious, to gratify the desires of a dear father or mother, knowing that nothing upon earth would be esteemed by their parents a blessing half so great as their sincere piety.

In this state the person resembles king Agrippa, who, under the temporary impression of St. Paul’s preaching, was constrained to say—“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian”—almost! alas! *only* almost, not altogether persuaded; some secret reserve is yet made; the strong hold of the heart is yet in the possession of sin, which, without the interposition of almighty grace, will ere long regain all its former dominion.

The bewitching pleasures of sin once more begin to court the soul: some youthful lusts present their flattering baits to the senses, and find within a party eager to catch at them. We are fallen creatures; our minds are become carnal; and we have a strong propensity to indulge the flesh. The seed of every sin is deposited in our corrupt nature; and though the seed may long continue dormant; yet if, like a vegetable seed that has been buried deep in the earth, it be brought towards the surface and placed in a favourable situation, it will unfold all its hidden powers, and ripen into

open transgression. Such is the fascinating power of sin, especially when become habitual, that it will insist upon indulgence at any rate ; even at the expense of fortune, character, and life itself. And now, all those promising appearances before spoken of disappear, and are covered, like the writing on the sea shore, with the overwhelming tide.

The strong attraction of evil company is another source of danger. Man is formed for society ; and we may add, he is formed *by* his society, whether it be good or evil. When Satan sinned and fell, he speedily drew man into the same condemnation. When Eve was prevailed upon to taste the forbidden fruit, she hastened to induce her husband to commit the same transgression. It is observable what pains are usually taken by the votaries of pleasure and of vice to lead their companions into the same ; how strongly do they solicit the young and the unsuspecting, to become parties in their ensnaring amusements and dangerous pleasures. Not content with their own sin and ruin, they become the missionaries of Satan, and labour to make proselytes for hell. But O that the advice of the wise man were regarded—"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

The fear of shame on account of religion keeps many in a hesitating state. Glorious and highly honourable as the religion of Jesus certainly is, the advocates of sin will pretend that it is a mean and low thing, not fit for persons of discernment, of taste, of fashion ; they will say, that to be moved with religious affections is to be irrational and enthusiastic ; and that your religious people, with all their pretensions, are only concealed hypocrites, and all their devotion merely whining and cant. Here, perhaps, the youth is brought to a stand. "Shall I then," says he, "encounter all this shame and disgrace? Must I, if religious, be treated with contempt by the world in general? Who can endure this?"

But stop, my friend, and let us argue this matter. What do you blush at? Are you ashamed of acknowledging your Creator, and bowing the knee before your Redeemer? Is it an unreasonable thing to credit the God of truth, or to love him who is infinitely amiable? Is it mean



and base to secure your everlasting happiness, even while at the same time you are promoting your best interests upon earth? If you are tempted to yield to the world because it forms the great majority, you are in a mistake. "There are more, far more with us than with them." I know that the visible crowd of deceived mortals take part against religion, but what are they compared with those who espouse it. Is not the great and eternal God with us? Does not he approve the humble and the pious soul? Is not Jesus, the glorious Saviour, with us? He was once himself despised and rejected of men on account of his piety, and now he is exalted on the throne of glory, he knows how to pity and defend his persecuted people. On our side we boast the innumerable tribes of angels, whose business and delight it is to minister to the heirs of salvation. Shall we be ashamed to do the will of God on earth as angels do in heaven? This is our prayer: shall it not be our practice too? With us, we associate all the spirits of just men made perfect, who, like an immense cloud of spectators, seem to look down upon us to animate us in our Christian course. Are *they* ashamed of their former diligence in religion? Why then should we? Yea, we may add—(awful thought!) the myriads of the damned, whose dwelling is in darkness and despair, are now of our mind. Once they laughed at the religious, but now their language is—"This is he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach: we fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!" *Wisdom of Solomon*, v. 4.

There is yet another cause of hesitation: it is temporal advantage. "Must I incur," says the halting professor, "must I incur the displeasure of my superiors, who despise religion, and who will despise me for it? Must I venture on the anger of a beloved parent, the displeasure of an indulgent husband, or the resentment of a generous patron?" I answer, you are only to determine, whether it be better to obey God or man. You are to remember, that "one thing is needful," even the care of the soul, which must be preferred to every temporal good: and you should recollect, that if you "seek first the kingdom

of God and his righteousness, every earthly blessing, that is good for you, shall be added thereto." Call to mind the wise and holy conduct of Moses, who "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt;" and this he did "by faith;" for, he renounced the prospect of worldly wealth in expectation of "the recompense of the eternal reward." Go thou and do likewise.

Thus then we see the tempted soul halting between two opinions. At one time, religion appears not only necessary, but excellent and beautiful: the Sabbath a sweet day of devotional rest; the house of God has a thousand charms to invite attendance; the Bible a book of sacred instruction and entertainment; and prayer, a rational and delightful employment. But, through the power of temptation, at another time, the scene is changed. Insensibly mixing with men of the world, the heart is seduced again, and gaiety, music, dress, and dancing, assume new charms and captivate the affections. Then religion sinks in the scale. Religion seems to wear a frowning aspect; the cavils of the infidel gather weight and importance; and infidelity promises, not future happiness, but present gratification, and that without the restraints which were feared before. Religion offers to make the man a saint; but as this appears too laborious, he relinquishes the future hope, and inclines to become a happy brute.

But still the mind is unsettled. Conscience is on the Lord's side. Something within yet withholds assent, and fears that all will not end well at last. The very sight of a good man will shake its confidence. A tolling bell, the view of a funeral, the news of a sudden death, or the apprehension of a fit of sickness, will excite alarm; and a faithful sermon will make the man, like Felix, tremble. How many have we known, who, when spectators of the death of others, or under apprehension of their own, have found their ground untenable, and have admitted that there is a reality in religion, and that it is necessary to their peace. Should the reader be disposed to make such a concession, he will be prepared to hear,

2. That such is the reality, pleasure, and advantage of true religion, that it deserves and demands our whole hearts.

In the case before us the question was "Who is God — Jehovah or Baal?" It was agreed, before the decision was made, that the true God should be followed, the false deserted. Would to God the same determination were made in all our minds! If religion be real, pleasant, and profitable, we will embrace it let the consequence be what it may. The trial was made. Baal's votaries sought him in vain—"there was no voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." But when the prophet of Jehovah cried—"Let it be known this day that thou art God, and that I am thy servant;" then the fire of the Lord descended, dried up the water, and consumed the sacrifice. The people were convinced, worshipped God, and destroyed his enemies. So let it be with us; if it can be made to appear that our religion is of God, then let us be truly religious, and destroy whatever impediment opposes its power and perfection.

But you will say, what do you mean by religion? The question is good. I will answer it. I mean by religion, not a system of opinions, nor a set of ceremonies; but a humbling conviction of our ruined state by sin; the application of the soul to Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour; and a sincere endeavour to oppose sin and live unto holiness. This is real religion. The religion of the Gospel. The religion which the Holy Spirit teacheth, and which the disciple of Jesus learneth. It is for the mind to be enlightened, so as to discover the holy character of God; to see our own deformity in the glass of his holy law; to be humbled in the dust as penitent sinners: and then, heartily to embrace the salvation proclaimed by the Gospel; to receive Jesus as our teacher, our righteousness, and our Lord, and to give up ourselves, without reserve, to be his for ever.

This religion is a glorious reality. It is scriptural; it is rational; it is experimental; it is practical. It answers the true ends of religion; it makes us holy and happy. It renews the heart; it reforms the manners; and it secures eternal bliss.

This is the religion, which, for substance, has been the choice and the practice of all the wise and good men who ever lived, from the days of Abel until now. This is the

religion we affirm to be every way pleasant and advantageous; for it includes the sublime delight of a good conscience; a conscience delivered from guilt by the atoning blood of Christ; the inexpressible pleasure of communion with God in his ordinances public and private; the privilege of society with the excellent of the earth; preservation from a thousand mischiefs and miseries to which the irreligious are liable; it affords a solid ground of consolation in the unavoidable evils of life; and it sustains the soul amidst the awful circumstances of death, with a lively hope full of immortality.

These, and many more, are the *present* advantages of true godliness: but who can describe those which are to come? Who can tell what are the joys at God's right hand—what it is to be with Christ, and behold his glory—what it is to enter into the joy of the Lord; to see him as he is; to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; to spend eternal ages in the beatific presence of God and the Lamb?

These then are the blessings of that holy religion which demands our whole hearts. And do we still hesitate—still halt between two opinions? Surely this hesitation is quite unreasonable, and unlike any thing in our ordinary conduct. Does the sick man hesitate whether to accept of health if it be in his power? Does the poor man hesitate when relief, when wealth is offered to him? Does the dutiful youth require a moment to determine whether or not he should love his father or his mother? Do we stop to enquire whether health and life ought to be preserved? If not, why halt between two opinions in the greater concern of eternal life and salvation? If we halt, it is a proof that we are not convinced of its necessity or its advantage. But have we not sufficiently proved that such is the reality, pleasure and advantage of the religion of Christ, that it deserves and demands our whole hearts? Now then, let the matter be brought to a final issue! Now let the awful decision be made.

Witness ye angels! ye benevolent spirits, who frequent our religious assemblies, and sometimes carry the glad tidings of a sinner's conversion to heaven, witness the decision which shall now be made!



“Choose then, this day,” this moment, “whom you will serve. If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord; choose ye this day whom ye will serve.” Only remember, “ye cannot serve two masters.” God will not accept of a divided heart. Does your heart say—“God forbid that we should forsake the Lord.” Does it say, “Nay, but we will serve the Lord.” Then be it so. From this happy moment, let it be a settled point, religion, serious religion, vital religion, shall be my first great business, and every thing that opposes it shall give place. So say, and so do, my brethren, and you are made for ever. Shall I then add as Joshua in a similar case, “Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, we are witnesses.” May God confirm your resolution, and by his almighty grace ever enable you to act conformably to it!

## SERMON LXI.

### SIN DETHRONED.

Romans vi. 14.....*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

**T**HE general power and prevalence of sin in the world is a most affecting consideration to a serious mind. He who knows how displeasing sin is to a holy God, and how destructive to the souls of men, cannot but lament the awful dominion it retains, even in a Christian country, where the will of God is revealed, where the consequences of sin are exposed, and where a sufficient remedy against it is presented.

This remedy, however rejected by many, is most thankfully received by a true Christian, who esteems a deliverance from the power of sin no less than a freedom from the guilt of it. If his first inquiry be “What shall I do to be saved?” his next is, “Who shall deliver me from this body of sin?” Blessed be God, the Gospel furnishes us with a satisfactory answer to both these inquiries. The Redeemer of men “came by water and blood; not by

water only, but by water and blood"—the water and the blood which flowed from his wounded side was an admirable emblem of the double design of his death, which was both to justify and to sanctify—to discharge from guilt, and to cleanse from pollution—to purge our consciences from dead works, and to deliver us from the dominion, as well as from the danger of sin. Sin shall not condemn the believer, because Christ hath died; sin shall not govern the believer, because he is under grace.

This comfortable declaration of the apostle Paul is here introduced, in consequence of a supposed objection to the glorious doctrines and privileges asserted in the former chapters of this epistle, particularly in the conclusion of the fifth chapter—"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"—as the exceeding sinfulness of sin is manifested by the law, so the super-abounding grace of God in the pardon of sin is made gloriously conspicuous by the Gospel. To this illustrious truth, some pharisaical or some licentious person may object, and connect with it this base inference—"Let us continue in the practice of sin, that this famous grace may abound so much the more in pardoning us." But does the holy apostle allow this inference to be just? No: his heart rises with indignation at the thought of such an abuse of divine grace; and he shews that believers in Christ were by their profession, and their baptism, dead to sin, and engaged to imitate their Saviour in a holy obedience; to which he adds the encouraging declaration in the text—"Sin shall not have dominion over *you*,"—over you *believers*; and for this reason—"ye are not under the law, but under *grace*."

To a sincere disciple of Christ, freedom from the power of sin is a most desirable blessing; his desires, his prayers, his endeavours are continually directed to this point: whatever, therefore, may assist him in the attainment of this great object, will be truly welcome. This text, then, which shows the means appointed of God for the purpose of delivering us from sin, demands our most careful attention. May the Holy Spirit assist and succeed our meditations, while we consider

I. The evil which we are encouraged to resist, and

II. The means afforded for our encouragement in resisting it.

I. The evil which, as Christians, we are encouraged to resist is—the dominion of sin. In this chapter, St. Paul represents sin as a master, and men as his servants—sin as a lord, and men as his vassals—sin as a king, and men as his subjects. He considers sin as a mighty usurper, a tyrant, exercising absolute dominion over the sinner; taking the sinner's heart for his throne, and the members of his body for his slaves. “Ye were,” saith he, “the servants of sin, for his servants ye are to whom ye obey; your members were instruments of unrighteousness to sin; sin reigned in your mortal bodies, so that ye obeyed the lusts thereof; sin abounded; sin reigned unto death.” By these strong expressions he justly represents the uncontrolled power of sin over the natural man; who refuses submission to the easy yoke of God's authority, and tamely submits to the vile and destructive drudgery of the tyrant of hell.

By a successful stratagem, sin obtained the supremacy over our first father; and his posterity, while they remain in their natural state, have never been able to break the yoke. Sin has reigned, and death has reigned, from that time, to the present. No monarchy can pretend to an antiquity equal with this; nor has any monarchy been so extensive as this. Whatever have been the variations of climate, colour, or customs, sin has been uniform in maintaining its empire. Go into all nations; and whether you call them Pagan, or Mahometan, or Jewish; whether barbarous or civilized; whether catholic or protestant, you must call them all sinners. In our own country, civilized as it is, enlightened as it is, full of churches and bibles as it is, sin reigns; sin has the dominion over Britons, the few excepted, whom the Son of God hath made “free indeed.” This awful representation of the matter is justified by the apostle John, who says—“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness,” or, “is in subjection to the wicked one.” This dreadful dominion of sin is promoted by various means.

1. By ignorance of God's will. In some countries, this is almost total; in our's it is partial, and in a great measure wilful. If *we* do not know our master's will, it is because we do not wish to know it; it is because we do not “like

to retain God in our knowledge ;” it is because we “ love darkness better than light, our deeds being evil.” And this, no doubt, is a principal cause that so many forsake the house of God, and neglect to read their Bibles ; they are not disposed to do the will of God ; why then should they learn it?

2. Our corrupt passions and sensual propensities reject divine controul. O how strongly are we inclined to evil ! how impetuous our desires ! beloved lusts will be gratified, though health, reputation, fortune, life itself are at stake ! “ How abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water !” “ who draweth iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-rope ;” “ who doeth evil with both hands earnestly !” So doth God, by his prophets, describe the vigorous and determined actings of sin in the corrupt nature of man.

3. The power of sin is promoted by the worldly interests of men, to which they readily give the decided preference, when they happen to clash, as they often do, with their duty to God. When profit may be obtained, when pleasure may be enjoyed, when fame may be acquired, farewell duty ! farewell the will of God ! farewell heaven ! They will sacrifice conscience and their everlasting interests to the gratification of the moment. Thus, for the sake of the world, the guests invited to the Gospel feast, with one consent desired to be excused, and the rich man departed from Jesus full of sorrow.

4. The dominion of sin is promoted by the powerful temptations and subtle artifices of Satan ; he goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour ; he presents the pleasures of sin in the most alluring colours ; he hides from men the pernicious consequences ; encourages them to venture boldly on the most daring offences ; tells them that God is very merciful, and repentance very easy : and thus supports his cruel empire over the world of sinners.

5. The countenance and example of the multitude contribute much to the support of sin’s dominion. Sinners readily follow the multitude to do evil. The broad road that leads to destruction is thronged with travellers ; and natural men smoothly follow the course of this world.



This has a wonderful tendency to silence the remonstrances of conscience, and to prevent that shame which would be unavoidable, were sin less common. Sinners are kept in countenance by the majority of their fellow creatures; if *they* are the slaves of iniquity, so are the greater part of their friends, and neighbours, and countrymen; and they are ready to hope that what is so general, cannot be very dangerous.

Some proceed further, and venture to glory in their shame. "Were they ashamed," said God by the prophet "when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed: neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them, they shall be cast down, saith the Lord" Jer. vi. 15. It argues an awful degree of hardness of heart, and affords a fear that God has give sinners intirely up, when they not only "commit such things as are worthy of death, but have pleasure in them that do them." Sin is the daily business, the chosen portion of some; they "make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof;" "Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant."

Such is the dominion of sin! such its absolute power over the children of Adam! such the means whereby it is promoted and maintained.

By some, indeed, it is occasionally opposed. The power of conscience, the influence of education, the exhortations of ministers, the fear of death, or the love of reputation, induce some to oppose its intire dominion. There have been in all ages, persons smitten with the beauty of virtue, and shocked at the deformity of vice, who have made considerable attempts to deliver themselves and others from the government of sin: but, without the knowledge of Christ, their efforts have proved ineffectual. Many of the heathen philosophers were themselves awful and pitiable proofs of the weakness of fallen nature to contend with the power of sin. Nor have many nominal christians succeeded much better. Like the formal Jews, they "followed after the law of righteousness," and with great apparent zeal; but they attained it not. What was

the cause of their failure? St. Paul says, it was—"Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling stone." Let us beware of their error. Let us profit by the instruction of the text. This is a light to our feet in this very important matter—"Sin shall not have dominion over *you*"—What shall prevent it? The apostle adds—"for, ye are not under the law, but under grace." And this is the thing we proposed to consider.

II. The means afforded for our encouragement in resisting sin: these are included in the words—"for, ye are not under the *law*, but under *grace*."

Grace is here opposed to the law, and signifies the gospel; which, in scripture, is frequently opposed to it, as in John i. 17, "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ," The Gospel may, with the strictest propriety, be called *grace*, because it is a declaration of the wonderful grace of God in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ; and it is so to be understood, 2 Cor. vi. 1. "We beseech you, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain:" that is—that ye receive not the doctrine of the gospel unprofitably. So St Paul exhorted the people of Antioch "to continue in the grace of God:" Acts xiii. 43; and, in another place it is said that "God gave testimony to the word of his grace."

The apostle mentions it as a reason why the believing Romans should not continue under the power of sin, that they were no longer under the law, but under the Gospel; consequently it appears that those who are under the Gospel dispensation, possess greater advantages for the destruction of sin, than those who were, or are, under the law.

By the law, we are to understand not the ceremonial or judicial law of Moses, which was peculiar to the Jews, and to which most of the Roman christians had never been subject; but the moral law, or law of the ten commandments; for it is the law by which the apostle himself learned the true nature of sin, chap. vii. 7; this was the law which he says is "holy, just, good, and spiritual;" the law in which he says he delighted, after the inward man;" and compared with which he adds, "I am carnal, sold under sin."

This holy law of God was a system of just but awful severity ; it was given at Mount Sinai in so tremendous a manner, that Moses himself was exceedingly terrified. But God had wise and holy designs in the establishment of it. “ The law entered that the offence might abound”—it was introduced among the Jews, not that they might be justified by it, but, by discovering how far they fell short of the obedience it required, and how their native corruption was rather irritated than suppressed by its most holy precepts, they might be more deeply impressed with a sense of their abounding sins ; and thus it became (together with the ceremonial law) “ a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ ;” and to prepare the way for the Gospel, in which the grace of God is as eminently conspicuous, as his holiness was under the law ; and that so, “ where sin had abounded, grace might much more abound.”

Now, believers in Christ are “ not under the law ;” they are “ dead to the law ;” they are “ delivered from the law :” By these expressions we are not to suppose that they are discharged from their obligation to obedience to God ; for the apostle expressly says of himself, 1 Cor. ix. 21, that he was “ not without law to God, but under the law to Christ ;” but believers are no longer under the law considered as a covenant, the terms of which are, “ the man that doeth them” (all and every one perfectly) “ shall live in them.” Jesus Christ has fulfilled all righteousness for his people, and is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth. Being accounted righteous through faith in Christ, they are redeemed from the curse of the law ; there is no more condemnation to them ; and the Gospel (which is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus) hath made them free from the law of sin and death. Rom. viii. 2.

It should be remembered, that while the law justly demanded obedience, it afforded no aid for the performance of it. Nor could it encourage any one to hope for pardon in case of disobedience. It must therefore be allowed that the law excited fear and a spirit of bondage, God dealing with his people who were under it, rather as servants than as sons.

The case is now altered. We are not called to "Mount Sinai," to hear the terrible threatenings of the law; but we are come to "Mount Sion," where grace, free, sovereign grace and mercy are published. Here indeed the holiness and justice of God are also gloriously displayed; but not, as under the law, in demanding from us a perfect unsinning obedience as the condition of life, and in denouncing the just wrath of God upon a defect of it; but in showing that Jesus Christ, our glorious surety, has magnified the law, and made it eternally honourable, by his own obedience to death in our behalf, on account of which God is now just, while he is the justifier of the ungodly.

The Gospel affords another advantage above the law. The law included the substance of all the holy precepts now contained in the New Testament; but in the Gospel they are expanded and full blown, and appear in all the loveliness and beauty of holiness. Jesus Christ, our only lawgiver, has divinely explained the duties briefly contained in the decalogue, especially in his admirable sermon on the mount. And the epistles of his inspired apostles to the churches, adapt the general precepts of the law to every relation and condition of life; shewing exactly the distinct duties of subjects, of husbands, wives, parents, children, servants, members of Christian societies, so that nothing is wanting clearly to disclose the full meaning of the two grand commandments—the supreme love of God, and the disinterested love of our neighbour.

The Gospel dispensation is superior to that of the law on another account; there is a more abundant measure of the Holy Spirit poured out upon the people of God, by which they not only attain a clearer knowledge of his will, but a larger degree of his gracious assistance in overcoming sin. It is the peculiar promise of the covenant of grace, Heb. viii. 10, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." Now this is a great deal more and better than having the laws of God written in a book, or fixed against a wall (though these are useful too;) it includes the renovation of our souls, by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby the mind is divinely enlightened, and the heart powerfully disposed, and enabled to comply with the will of God.



The Gospel assures us of sufficient grace for every purpose required. All grace is treasured up in Jesus for the use of his people ; in him “ all fulness dwells ;” and “ of this fulness they may receive daily, grace for grace.” Jo. 1. 16. There is an inexhaustible fulness of grace in him as the head of the church : and it is intended for the supply of believers ; so that in all their wants and sorrows they may, by prayer and faith, receive abundance of grace. Whatever duties they have to perform, whatever trials they are called to bear, whatever sins they have to oppose, they may depend on sufficient strength and grace for the purpose. On this ground, St. Paul boldly says, “ I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me.” He was weak in himself, but strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, who, upon a certain occasion, said to him for his encouragement, “ My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness,” 2 Cor. xii. 9.

The love of Christ is another grand assistant in our victory over sin. Love is the most strong and generous of all the passions, and the hardest service becomes easy when this prevails. This was that which supported the first Christians in their almost incredible labours and sufferings. The lively sense they entertained of his wonderful affection to their souls, in dying for their sins, animated them to the most vigorous exertions in his cause, led them to glory in his cross, and to esteem themselves happy in laying down their lives for his sake. “ The love of Christ,” said St. Paul, “ *constraineth us*”—it *bears us away* like a strong and resistless torrent (2 Cor. v. 14.) while we thus judge, that, if Christ died for our redemption, even when we were in a state of condemnation and death, it is fit that our ransomed lives should be sacred to him ; this consideration will have a powerful effect upon the believer when tempted to sin. Shall that sin which Christ hated—that sin for which Christ suffered—that sin which he died to deliver me from, have dominion over me ? God forbid ! Am I not dead to sin by baptismal engagements and obligations ? Am I not baptized into his death ? engaging thereby to be conformed to it ? that, as he died for it, I should die to it ; and, that as he was raised from the dead, so I should arise from the grave of sin to walk in

newness of life? Is not my old man of sin crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth I should not serve sin? Such is the reasoning of the holy apostle in this chapter, and such is the holy reasoning of every child of God, in his right mind.

The grace of the Gospel affords yet further aid in this great conflict, by the cheering views it presents of everlasting glory. We are engaged in a severe warfare, but under the Captain of our salvation, we are assured of victory. Though we have been the slaves of sin, we may boldly reject its usurped authority, and transfer our faculties to the service of Christ, with the certainty of acceptance and protection. Let our members henceforth be employed as weapons in the Lord's warfare. Unequal as we are to encounter native depravity, inveterate habits of evil, an alluring or threatening world, a raging and subtle devil, when enlisted in Christ's service, we may truly say, "there are more on our side than against us:" yea, "If God be for us," (and he certainly is, if warring against sin) "who can be against us?" Nothing, however hostile and formidable, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Our perseverance to the end is secured by the promise and power of God; and we shall be more than conquerors through him. We shall be enabled to say at the solemn close of life, "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Covered with unworthiness and shame, in ourselves considered, we shall be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Our weak and defiled bodies shall become heavenly and incorruptible; living under grace, we shall die into glory, and rise to eternal life.

Such are the solid and sublime hopes of the Christian. And will these have no holy influence upon his conduct? Hear St. John. "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." The heirs of glory will disdain the low gratifications and filthy drudgery of sin. They know that their Saviour is holy, the society they expect to join is holy, their employments and delights will be holy; their hope therefore, as well as their faith, will purify their souls, influence their walk, and prevent the dominion of sin.

CONCLUSION.—Who can behold the general dominion of sin over the world without the deepest concern! O that ever this cursed foe to God and man should acquire universal authority! “O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, for the slain of the daughter of my people!” If sin continue to reign, it will reign unto death; the wages of sin is death. Sin unpardoned, sin unsubdued, must issue in the sinner’s everlasting destruction. What then is *my* state? Does sin reign over me; or have I obtained dominion over sin? Let conscience make a sincere inquiry, and report a faithful answer.

Having learned by this discourse, that no means are effectual to stop the progress of sin, but those afforded by the Gospel of grace, let this serve to render the Gospel more dear and precious. It is not by the knowledge of the law, nor by endeavours in our own strength to fulfil its precepts, that the power of sin can be destroyed. No; it is only the Gospel that is the power of God unto salvation—salvation from the guilt, or salvation from the dominion of sin. It is the knowledge of Christ crucified; it is faith in him; it is union to him; it is love to him; it is hope in him; that must invigorate my soul in this holy war. Let me then highly prize the Gospel of grace, and earnestly pray for the grace of the Gospel; that so, having obeyed from the heart that form (or mould) of doctrine, into which I have been delivered, my whole temper and life may be transformed into a glorious resemblance of it; being “made free from sin, and become a servant of God, my fruit may be unto holiness, and my end, everlasting life.”

This subject effectually refutes that vile slander which is so unjustly cast on the doctrines of grace, as if they were conducive to sin, and unfriendly to holiness. The very reverse is the truth; for while the professed advocates of righteousness by the law, can make no effectual stand against the power of sin, but are commonly its wretched vassals; humble believers in Jesus, justified by his blood, and saved alone by grace, are enabled to fight the good fight of faith, and subdue their most powerful iniquities; and thus, “grace reigns, through righteousness,

unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." To whom, the Conqueror over sin, and death, and hell, be glory in all the churches, world without end. Amen.

## SERMON LXII.

### UNIVERSAL HOLINESS.

Zechariah xiv. 20.....*In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses*  
—*HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.*

THE predictions of the prophet in this chapter, appear to refer to the times of the Gospel, when the word of Christ, first preached at Jerusalem, should be propagated far and wide; and when the kingdom of Messiah should be generally established. Perhaps the text itself may be a prediction of the latter-day glory, when the knowledge of Christ shall cover the whole earth; and when the holiness of God's people shall be remarkably great and glorious, so that in all their conversation, and in all their actions, civil as well as religious, one uniform tenor of holiness will appear. Should this be the special design of the words, it will nevertheless be allowed, that at all times and in all places, "Holiness becometh the house of the Lord;" and that it is his royal will and pleasure that all who name the name of Christ should depart from all iniquity, and be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness.

This holiness, which we call universal holiness, because it extends to the whole man, and to his whole conduct, is described in the text in a remarkable manner. The prophet foretels, that holiness to the Lord shall be written on the bells, or bridles, that is, upon the ornaments of the horses. Now this inscription, *Holiness unto the Lord*, was originally engraved on a plate of gold, and fixed on the front of the mitre, or turban, of the high priest; and it was ordered to be upon his forehead, when he went into the holy of holies, that he might bear the iniquity of Israel, and that they might be accepted before Jehovah, Exod. xxxviii. 38. In wearing this, he was a type of Christ, our great high priest, "the holy one of God," who bore our iniqui-



ties in his own body on the cross, and who now appears in the presence of God for us, and for our acceptance: it might also denote the personal holiness of true believers, who should be openly devoted to God, as if this inscription appeared on their foreheads.

But it is here said, that this inscription shall be found on the ornaments of the horses. Were we to take it literally, it might signify that great and rich men, or travellers, shall be so far from being ashamed of religion, that they shall write this motto on the trappings of their horses, as gentlemen now use their crests; that they shall glory in their profession of the Gospel, and make this sentence a memento to themselves, that they may do every thing to the glory of God. But we may more properly consider the meaning to be, that religion shall not be confined to sacred persons, times, and places, as this inscription originally was to the high priest; but that all real Christians, being "a holy priesthood," "a nation of priests," shall be religious at all times and in all things; that true holiness shall extend itself to all the ordinary concerns of life: in a word, that Christians shall be universally holy. The proposition, therefore, which we derive from the text, and shall endeavour to inforce, is this,

*Universal holiness becomes the profession of the Gospel.*

To be holy, signifies, in Scripture, to be set apart from a common or profane use, to God and his service. Holiness is the renovation of our nature by the Spirit of God; it is the restoration of the image of God in our souls; whereby we are enabled to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness; and this, by virtue of our union with Christ, and by means of his Gospel.

It should be understood that the holiness required by the Gospel is something far superior to what is called morality, or a practice of the duties of life. This is good in its place, and useful to society: and all the duties of morality are included in holiness. But holiness supposes the renewal of the heart in its powers and dispositions. The understanding, which by nature is in gross darkness as to divine things, is enlightened by the Spirit of God, and enabled to receive "the truth as it is in Jesus." The will, which is naturally averse from good, and strongly in-

clined to sin, is so renewed by grace, that it chuses the good and rejects the evil; hates what is hateful to God, and loves what is agreeable to him. The affections of the soul, which before were wild and carnal, are now brought into order and subjection, fixing with delight upon those spiritual and heavenly objects, which they once neglected and despised. "The leading powers of the soul being thus sanctified, the members of the body, which were 'instruments of unrighteousness to sin,' become 'instruments of righteousness unto God.' The eyes, the tongue, the ears, the hands, the feet, are not only restrained from sin, as St. Paul said of himself, that he 'kept his body under, and brought it into subjection;' but they become ready to obey God, to whom they yield themselves in order to the practice of righteousness: the tongue lays itself out in the praises of God, and the commendation of holiness; the hands and feet in assisting our neighbour, and the other parts of the body, according to their several capacities, in the practice of religion."

Hence it appears that there is an universal change made in a real Christian; which is very far superior to the mere practice of morality. True holiness has always a relation to Christ and the Gospel; it is by virtue of union with him, the exercise of faith in him, and diligent imitation of him, that the Christian becomes holy: and the whole of this is effected by the gracious and super-natural operations of the Holy Spirit. Thus St. Paul expresses his generous wishes for his Thessalonian friends, 1 Eph. v. 23. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here we perceive that God himself is the author of holiness; it must come from him; for there is nothing in our fallen nature to produce it; and it proceeds from him as he is "the God of peace;" as reconciled to us through the blood of his Son: and he is said to "sanctify us wholly"—our whole nature partakes of his sanctifying grace: and he instances in the various powers of our nature. By the *spirit*, we may understand the *mind*, that leading faculty of man, whereby he is distinguished above other creatures; by the *soul* may be intended the inferior faculties,

the passions, and affections; and by the *body*, the outward man, with its various senses, is designed. Each of these powers is already sanctified in its measure, and shall be completely so at last; so that the whole shall be found blameless at the second coming of Christ.

The principal instrument employed by the Spirit of grace in effecting this holy change, is the word of the Gospel; according to our Lord's petition for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth;" and according to his declaration in another case, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." When the doctrines, promises, and precepts of the Gospel are understood, and applied to the heart, they cannot fail to regulate the whole of the conduct. Hence the great change, observable in some of the first converts from pagan idolatry and vice to christianity, is ascribed to faith; "their hearts were purified by faith," Acts, xv. 9: and, so far is the faith of the Gospel from being injurious to the cause of holiness, that it is essentially necessary to its existence: indeed, the sum of our holy religion is, the "faith that worketh by love."

The holiness of the Gospel, of which we are speaking, has, for its grand objects, God and our neighbour. To love God supremely is the first concern of the believer. His glorious perfections entitle him to the highest place in the heart. Heathen moralists, and some who assume the christian name, profess to practise virtue for its own sake; but the believer goes further, he makes it his ambition to please God, to delight himself in the Almighty, to be accepted of him, and to promote his glory in all the actions of his life.

Hence the law of God, which to others seem severe, becomes pleasant to him, and he delights in it, after the inward man. That yoke, which others account heavy, he deems light, and thinks none of his commandments grievous. Hence, the worship of God, instead of being burdensome to him, is his pleasure. Prayer and praise, reading and hearing the word of the Lord, are his delightful exercises. He accounts a day in God's courts better than a thousand; and would prefer the humble office of a door-

keeper there, to the most splendid or profitable employments of the sinner.

That "holiness to the Lord," should be written on the doors of the church or of the closet, few will deny. We shall therefore not enlarge on the necessity of a holy temper in religious engagements. It is our design rather to show, how religion is to influence the common concerns of life; how holiness, instead of being confined to sacred things, is to be mingled with our ordinary affairs, or according to our text, be "written on the bells of the horses."

The propriety of dwelling upon this, will be sufficiently obvious to every considerate and consistent Christian, who has observed the state of things among the hearers of the Gospel at large. We see little practical religion among many nominal Christians and unstable professors. Even the most exemplary have cause to lament their deficiencies. Hence it is that God is but little glorified, compared with what might be expected. The domestic peace of professing families is too often broken. Fellow Christians are too frequently grieved and stumbled. There is a notorious want of mutual affection in many religious societies, manifested by their contentions, and proneness to separate on trifling occasions. On these accounts the people of the world are confirmed in their prejudices against the doctrines of grace: they pretend that religion is an useless thing, or a mere cloak to cover bad intentions; and they even tax the doctrines of the Gospel with a licentious tendency. But whence do these evils arise? Nominal Christians are really ignorant of the nature of true religion; and too frequently, instead of using its doctrines and precepts for their sanctification, pervert its forms to an atonement for their vices; thus making the holy religion of Jesus an apology for immorality, and Christ himself "the minister of sin." Unstable professors have probably taken but a very partial and ineffectual view of the Gospel; Arminian prejudices cut off their strength, or Antinomian notions weaken their sense of obligation; or, enthusiastically, they make their feelings the rule of action, instead of the word of God. Some more serious and enlightened Christians fail through want of exercising faith on what



they do know ; for the Gospel does not operate like a charm on those who profess it : it has no further influence than as it is understood, remembered, trusted in, and applied to our feelings, tempers, conversation, and actions ; and this particular and universal application of the principles of the Gospel, is what I consider as alluded to in the text.

Let us then consider, 1. What should be the Christian's temper and views with regard to himself, and

2. What should be his disposition and conduct towards his fellow men.

1. Let the Christian remember that he is " the temple of the Holy Ghost ;" and that the temple of the Lord must be holy. Being redeemed by the blood of Christ, he is no longer his own ; his time, his talents, are not at his own disposal ; they are dedicated things ; they are " holiness to the Lord." Compelled by the mercies of God, he is to present his body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to the Lord, which is truly his reasonable service : whether he lives, he lives to the Lord ; or whether he dies, he dies to the Lord ; his aim and constant endeavour should be that Christ may be glorified both by his life and death.

In subservience to this great design, he is to " put on the Lord Jesus Christ," and imitate " the mind that was in him." Love is the leading grace, and will be followed by all the amiable train of Christian virtues. Humility is of essential importance, and will guard him against a thousand snares and dangers. Temperance in food, and in all other gratifications of the senses, is constantly necessary ; for if the appetites be too much indulged, the interests of the soul cannot but suffer. Patience under trying circumstances, contentment with a humble lot, submission to the rod of a heavenly Father, are indispensably necessary, and are very eminent branches of Gospel holiness. Crucifixion to this vain and sinful world is equally the believer's duty. He who lives in the exercise of that faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, will not cleave to the dust as his portion : he who believes the scriptural representation of eternal and heavenly things, and enjoys a good hope through grace of interest in them, will have his affections raised from the low objects of sense, and fixed, in some measure, on things above, where Christ is.

He will therefore discover a holy indifference to the world; its wealth, honours, splendour, decorations, and amusements will appear to him like the toys of children; and his near views of the eternal state, from which he is separated only by the thin partition of life, will convince him that neither the joys nor sorrows of the present state should much engage his heart; and thus will he conduct himself as "a stranger and a pilgrim;" thankful indeed for every comfortable accommodation, but still pressing on towards his heavenly home.

2. Holiness to the Lord is to be exemplified in the relative duties of social life. In general, the Christian has two things to regard—to do no harm, and to do much good. It is necessary that he should be "blameless and harmless, as a child of God, without rebuke." Many eyes are fixed on the professor of the Gospel; many wish and watch for his halting, and long for an occasion of glorying over him as a hypocrite. Great then is the need of watchfulness, and of peculiar exactness in his whole walk, that the enemy may be disappointed, and be obliged to say of the Christian as of Daniel, "We shall not find any occasion against this man, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." And even in the matter of religion, his care must be that, "his good be not evil spoken of:" his zeal should not have a tendency to offend, but to conciliate; not to provoke, but to invite. The holy love of the Gospel "suffereth long and is kind; vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; behaveth not unseemly; seeketh not her own; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Are we better informed than our neighbour? are we endued with knowledge? let us "shew out of a good conversation our works with meekness of wisdom;" for the wisdom which is from above is pure and peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits. The holiness of the Gospel includes a pacific temper. "Following peace with all men" is connected with that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:" we must rather bear injuries than resent them; rather recede from our rights, than contentiously maintain them; we are even to forgive our greatest enemies; if they hunger, to feed them; if they thirst, to

give them drink, and thus heap coals of fire on their heads, and melt them down by kindness.

Active benevolence is a necessary fruit of holiness. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" is the grand comprehensive rule, the sum of social duty, both in the Old and New Testament; but most strongly enforced by the example of Christ himself, who has made it the chief test of true religion: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

But there are certain situations in life, wherein persons being mutually related to each other, are expected more particularly to manifest the holiness of the Gospel. The first of these is the conjugal state. The Creator himself appointed this union before the fall; but we, being now all fallen creatures, much grace is needful to preserve such a temper and conduct as becomes christian husbands and wives. So many trials, troubles, and crosses, necessarily occur in the married state, that much mutual forbearance and forgiveness, much self-denial, prudence, and kindness are requisite. The Scriptures therefore largely inculcate the duties of the husband and the wife, and require their performance from evangelical motives, such as, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies—even as the Lord the Church, for we are members of his body." Eph. v. 25, &c. In like manner it is commanded, ver. 22, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord: for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the Saviour of the body: therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands." "Christians, thus married in grace as well as in nature, will be helpers of each other's faith and joy in this world, and everlasting friends in a more exalted way of life in the kingdom of God. Grace in the heart will double every temporal mercy, soften every temporal misery, and lead them on, with united hands, towards the kingdom of heaven."

The duties of parents and children should be performed in the spirit of holiness. Parents who fear the Lord themselves, will consider it their first and great concern to

“bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” In early life, they must be restrained from the indulgence of self-will, and taught to submit to authority, for this is the very foundation of good education. They should be kept, as much as possible from such companions and books as pollute the imagination, and inflame the passions. The Christian parent will be solicitous and assiduous in his endeavours to inculcate upon the youthful mind, the great things of the Gospel; not only leading his charge to a place of worship where the truth is plainly and warmly preached, but endeavouring to enforce what is heard in public, by private instruction and application. The gentlest means of checking the corruptions of nature are to be preferred, for fathers are “not to provoke their children to wrath, lest they be discouraged;” but severer methods must sometimes be used; yet always with moderation, and without sinful anger. The example of a pious parent is the most effectual lesson, and when this is united with fervent prayer and diligent instruction, it may be hoped that the Lord will crown with success.

Children are commanded “to obey their parents, in the Lord, for this is right.” The law of nature requires it, and especially the law of God; which also adds a singular promise of prosperity to the obedient. Parents are to be honoured by submission to all their lawful commands; by attention to their exhortations; by a respectful and obliging deportment; and a steady concern for their interest and comfort, especially under the infirmities of age. In many cases, it will be necessary to comply with inconveniences, to submit to restraints, to conceal their mistakes, and if needful to support them in distress and poverty. And this is to be done “in the Lord,” for the Lord’s sake, and as a part of that “holiness to the Lord,” which forms the Christian character.

Masters and servants are to perform their several duties under the influence of the same holy principle. Servants need the humility which the Gospel inspires, to submit to the duties of their humble places, which undoubtedly are mortifying to the pride of corrupt nature. But as God has appointed a variety of stations, in which some must serve, and others rule, it becomes a Christian servant to



acquiesce in the divine will. Accordingly the apostle exhorts servants "to be obedient to them that are their masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, *as unto Christ*; not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but *as the servants of Christ*, doing the will of God from the heart: with good will doing service, *as to the Lord*, and not to men." Eph. vi. 5, &c. Here the servants duty is very fully expressed; and it is observable how often the apostle repeats the necessity of doing all *as to the Lord*—with a regard to his will and glory, and this is especially incumbent on pious and professing servants who know the Lord. A regard to this would effectually remove an objection frequently made, but very dishonourable to the Christian character "that masters would rather have any servants than those who are professors." Let "holiness to the Lord" be inscribed on the servant, and it exalts this humble lot, for in the eye of God, it is not the station that ennobles, but discharging the duties of it well; therefore St. Paul adds "Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether bond or free."

Masters too are required, by the same authority, to "do the same things to their servants, forbearing threatening; knowing that their master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him," ver. 9. Those who govern, while they justly require and expect that their business should be done diligently and faithfully, must not be proud, imperious or cruel; they should remember that the Lord only has made them superior; the case might have been reversed; and they should consider what treatment they would desire were the stations to be exchanged. They should consult their interest and comfort, should allow them leisure for retirement, opportunity to hear the word, and contribute to their spiritual good by the careful, pious, and constant observation of family worship.

The Christian *tradesman* is to remember his holy profession in the conduct of his affairs; to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. His religion is not to be confined to the church or the closet. Let holiness to the Lord be his motto in the shop, in the market, in the field. Strict honesty in all his dealings is essentially

necessary for to defraud, deceive, or over-reach a neighbour; to take the advantage of his ignorance; to seek immoderate profits; rashly to contract debts without the prospect of payment; with a thousand other abominations occurring among the men of the world; are doubly shocking and abominable in the professor of the Gospel. The religious tradesman is an honourable character, but the dishonest professor is of all creatures the most detestable and injurious.

Let the *wealthy Christian* write the motto of our text upon his bags of gold—"Holiness to the Lord;" let him think it as much his privilege as his duty, to consecrate the use of his riches, to him who alone gave him power to get wealth; whose protection is needful for its preservation; without whose blessing it cannot be enjoyed: who gave it him for the purpose of enabling him to do good; and who will require an account of the manner in which his talents have been employed.

Let the *subject* remember his Christian character; to "fear God," and to "honour the king," are duties coupled together by the apostle. To pray for kings and rulers, and to seek the peace of our country, are so evidently commanded in Scripture, that none but an infidel can dispute the obligation. Civil magistracy is of God, and an unspeakable blessing to any country; the consistent Christian therefore will obey the laws, and be subject to the higher powers, not only for wrath (or fear of punishment) but also for conscience' sake; he will render to God the things that are God's, and to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's—to all their dues; tribute, custom, fear, and honour; and thus prove himself "a Christian patriot."

Thus have we briefly exhibited "the beauty of holiness," and attempted to shew that universal holiness becomes the profession of the Gospel. This will probably be denied by few; but a cold assent to the necessity and propriety of holiness, is by no means enough. Are *we* holy? It is the solemn determination of heaven, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Let us therefore not be deceived; what a man soweth he shall surely reap. A soul unsanctified, can never gain admittance into heaven, the residence of a holy God, holy angels, and holy saints.

Let such immediately flee to the Saviour for pardon, and implore the aid of his Spirit to make them holy.

Let believers lament the remains of unholy tempers ; let them hunger and thirst after more holiness ; let them live a life of faith in Christ ; and be daily *looking to Jesus*—so beholding his glory, as to experience an increasing conformity to his holy image, till they come at last to those pure regions where “ Holiness to the Lord ” is indeed universal, complete, and everlasting.

## SERMON LXIII.

A GOOD HOPE THROUGH GRACE.

2 Thess. ii. 16.....*And good hope through grace.*

THESE words are part of an affectionate prayer, offered up by the apostle of the Gentiles, in behalf of the Thessalonian Christians ; and we may obtain great assistance in praying for ourselves, from such passages as this ; being assured that we cannot ask amiss if we ask in the words of the holy Spirit himself. It is addressed to the Lord Jesus Christ, equally with God the Father ; and so affords a proof, among many others of the divinity of our Saviour, who could not otherwise hear or answer our prayers. *Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and GOOD HOPE THROUGH GRACE, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.* Comfort and steadiness in religion are the blessings he prays for ; and he takes encouragement in asking for them, from the love of God already manifested, in the consolation and hope they had enjoyed—*a good hope, through grace.*

Among the various and precious blessings of the Gospel-salvation, this is one of the chief. The value and use of hope, in the conduct of human affairs in general, is well known ; it is this that stimulates man to action, reconciles him to suffering, and proves the very cordial of life : but the good hope we are now treating of is as much superior

to this, as heaven is superior to earth, or eternity to time : it is a hope full of glory and immortality. May the God of hope fill us with joy and peace in believing, and render our present service the means either of exciting or of confirming this good hope in all our souls ! My design in this discourse is simply to shew that,

*A good hope, through grace, is an invaluable blessing to a Christian, both in life and death.*

Now this good hope includes several important ideas, which are not always duly considered.

1. A serious, believing, habitual regard to a future state ; according to the representations made of it in the sacred scriptures. No atheist, denying the being of God ; no deist rejecting the Bible, can possess this hope. We owe it all to the gracious revelation of God in the Gospel, wherein life and immortality are brought to light. Without these, all is vague and dark and doubtful : but, with God's word in our hands, we learn the nature of our own immortal spirits ; the certainty of their existing separately from our bodies after death ; the resurrection of these mortal bodies from the grave ; and the complete blessedness of the saints in the kingdom of God for ever.

Giving credit to the testimony of God on these important points, the believer entertains an *habitual* regard to the eternal world, and can in some measure say with the apostle, *I look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.* And this habitual respect to future things will be discovered by a serious regard to the Lord's day, to the ordinances of his house, to the Scriptures of truth, to secret prayer, and all those means of spiritual information and improvement, which are connected with this hope.

2. Preparatory to this hope there must be a humbling conviction of our being sinners, and of our danger and helplessness as such. The law must do its office, in convincing us of our guilt and misery, and exciting in us a sincere desire to flee from the wrath to come ; for without this, it is difficult to conceive how the hope of salvation can be entertained, as it implies a deliverance from the dreadful and deserved consequences of our rebellion against God.



We can therefore scarcely suppose a person to know any thing of hope, who never knew what it was to fear; for the hope of the Gospel is properly opposed to the fear of the law. And this leads us to observe that,

3. This hope implies some acquaintance with the glorious Gospel of salvation by Jesus Christ. It is called, Col. i. 23. "*The hope of the Gospel*," a hope derived solely from its discoveries and promises; it is a hope inseparably connected with "the faith of the Gospel;" and in this it differs essentially from a hope arising from mistake, from superstition, or from the partiality of self-love.

The term, *a good hope*, seems designed to distinguish it from every kind of hope which is not good. We read in the book of Job, chap. viii. 13. of *the hypocrite's hope*; and it is said of it, that *it shall perish, and be cut off*; and, that "his trust,"—his confidence and security, *shall be as a spider's web*, it shall be swept away with the besom of destruction. In another place (Job xxvii. 8,) it is said—"*What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? A hypocrite may have a hope, such as it is; and he may be a gainer by it; he may gain the applause of men; but when death comes, when God taketh away his soul, what becomes of his hope? it fails him when he wants it most; for the righteous hath hope in his death; but the wicked is driven away in his wickedness.*" Of how great consequence then is it to have *a good hope*!

Let us therefore consider on what accounts the hope of the Gospel is called a *good hope*. And there are three things which entitle it to that name; for, the *object* of it is good—the *foundation* of it is good—and the *effect* of it is good.

1. The *object* of this hope is good—supremely good. All hope has something good for its object, something at least accounted good. But the object of the believer's hope is eminently, infinitely good. It is none of the gay and dazzling objects of sense; not worldly honour, nor filthy lucre, nor sensual delight; but the pure, spiritual, exalted felicities of the heavenly world; those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore; those objects which the word of God reveals, and which faith discerns;

for "faith is the substance (or basis) of things hoped for;" faith gives credit to the testimony of God, concerning what he has prepared for them that love him; and hope expects to enjoy them in God's good time.

It doth not indeed fully appear as yet what we shall be; the particulars of our celestial enjoyments are not disclosed; but, they are "ready to be revealed, in the last time." This we know, that death, dreadful as it is to nature, will be friendly to the believer, in releasing him from that body of sin and death, in which he now groans, being burdened. To be "absent from the body," is to be "present with the Lord." And O! who can tell the blessedness of that condition! It is a great thing to be freed from all pain and disease—to have "all tears wiped away from our eyes"—to be where there is "no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying:" But it is a thing unspeakably greater and more glorious to be "before the throne of God and the Lamb;" it must be infinitely delightful to be "*with Christ*,"—to be "for ever with the Lord." This was St. Paul's highest idea of heaven, "to be for ever with Christ;" and our Lord himself, in his prayer for his disciples, expresses no higher notion of happiness than this—"that they may be with me, where I am, to behold my glory," John xvii. 24. Here, in the glass of faith, we behold that glory obscurely and imperfectly; but there we shall see him "as he is"—"see him face to face"—in "our flesh we shall see God," or, see God in our flesh, Immanuel, God with us.

How good then, how glorious is this hope! How pleasant will it be to receive perpetual additions to our stock of divine knowledge; how delightful to feel ourselves perfectly conformed to the image of God; how satisfying to be always engaged in the divine service of our Redeemer; how charming to enjoy the honourable society of glorious angels, of the pure spirits of ransomed sinners: how cheering the thought of rejoining those dear and pious relations and friends who are gone before us to glory, or who shall quickly follow us thither after a short separation! O how good a hope is this, which includes objects so great, so glorious as these!

2. There is another reason why this hope may be called good, and a most important reason it is.—The *foundation* of it is good : for without a good foundation for our hope, whatever objects it may embrace, it is so far from good, that it will make us ashamed, and issue in confusion and disappointment.

Nothing is more common than to profess a hope of going to heaven ; it is so common, that, “ as I hope to be saved,” is a proverbial saying, even in the mouths of the most profane :—a sad sign, however, that those who use the phrase in a light and trifling manner, have no part nor lot in this matter. A good hope, is a hope *through grace*. Mark well, the word—“ *through grace*”—a hope built on the free and sovereign favour of God, through the satisfaction of Christ—a hope that rests upon Jesus, the only sure foundation for sinners—a hope that relies on the precious promises of a covenant God. Only such a hope as this can be called “ good ;” and we may consider this hope *through grace*, as opposed both to our own *merit* and *demerit*.

A hope through grace is opposed to *human merit*—that fatal “ stumbling stone” both to ancient Jews and modern Christians. How often do we find poor ignorant people, when sick and dying, express their hope of going to heaven, because “ they never did any harm”—“ paid every one his own,”—or “ were decent and regular in going to church,” &c. But thus to build our hope on ourselves, is to betray an intire ignorance of the Gospel, which affords no hope for a sinner, except in and through Jesus. Thus to hope in ourselves is utterly to subvert and destroy the whole plan of salvation, as St. Paul speaks, Gal. ii. 21. “ I do not frustrate the grace of God : for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” There is a general disposition among all mankind to put their trust in themselves and their own works ; and though there is a multitude of different religions in the world, which are contrary to each other in many things, yet they generally agree in this—to bring something of their own as the ground of acceptance with God. The religion of the Gospel is totally the reverse. It allows of no boasting ; it teaches the best saint to call himself “ an unprofitable servant,” and

to say, "God forbid that I should glory in any thing, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." Those, therefore, whose hope is derived from self, are anti-christian in their plan, and overthrow, as much as in them lies, the plan of the Gospel—they "frustrate the grace of God"—make it void—set it aside, leave no place for it; they make Christ "to have died in vain;" they do not say so with their lips, but by their false faith and false hopes; for if there be any thing in ourselves to hope in, the death of Christ, who is our hope and who became such by dying for us, is, of course, a needless thing. And this is a dreadful blasphemy. But it is a blasphemy that those who are taught of God cannot be guilty of; for they clearly see that Jesus is the only hope of a sinner; and, with St. Paul, account their former gain, loss; and reckon all things to be dung and dross, that they may know Christ, and be found in him. Phil. iii.

As this hope through grace is opposed to the *merit of works*, so it is also exalted above the *demerit of sin*. We are sinners; guilty, helpless sinners. And shall *sinners* hope for heaven? Shall vile rebels, who deserve hell, hope for glory? It is written that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven"—that "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, or worketh abomination," &c. How then can wretches so impure, so vile, so abominable in the eyes of God and in their own eyes, entertain a hope of happiness?

To all this, we oppose the word *grace*; this hope, remember, is *through grace*. We are "saved by grace." "Grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life." We are ungodly by nature; but "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We were "enemies;" but when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Surely it may well be said—"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;" and, "they that receive abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life, by Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 16, 17. Thus St. Paul opposes the hope by grace, to the awful demerit of sin, Titus iii. 3—7. "We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, &c. but after that the kindness and love of



God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us—that being justified by *grace*, we should be made heirs, according to the *hope* of eternal life.” Jesus Christ is so intirely the ground of our hope, that he takes one of his gracious names from being so ; he is called, 1 Tim. i. 1. “ *Our hope* ;” and in Col. i. 27, “ Christ in you—the hope of glory.”

The good hope we are speaking of, derives much of its stability from the promises of God in his word. Faith accepts God’s bond, and hope waits for its payment. “ Remember,” said the holy psalmist, “ *the word* unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope,” Ps. cxix. 49. All the good things which believers expect are promised. We have exceeding great and precious promises, which are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. On these, the Lord causes his people to hope ; it is the work of the Holy Spirit to enable us to do this, according to Rom. xv. 13. “ Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” There is such a privilege as *abounding in hope*—having an abundant hope, a “ lively hope,” the full assurance of hope ;” so that not one doubt or fear remains as to the final attainment of its objects ; and wherever this is, it is through the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit. This was the language of an ancient believer, 1 Chron. xvii. 23. “ Therefore now Lord, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant be established for ever, and *do as thou has said* ;” or as he expresses it in another place, Ps. cxix. 116, “ Uphold me according to thy word : and let me not be ashamed of my hope.” This is indeed a good hope—a hope that will never make us ashamed.

3. The hope we are describing is good on a third account.—*The effect of it is good.* The man who possesses it is the better as well as the happier for it. St. John says, “ every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure”—he endeavours, by divine grace, to attain all possible purity in heart and life, in conformity to the pure and holy Jesus, who will admit none but holy ones into his blissful presence.

Gratitude to the kind author of his hope, to whom he owes unspeakable obligations, constrains him to avoid the sins which he hates, and to perform the obedience which he loves. "Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation," saith the psalmist, and he adds, "I have done thy commandments," Ps. cxix. 166. This hope renders the Christian active in the service of Christ, and for the good of his fellow men; for he is assured that, though there is no merit in his best performances, yet, the same grace to which he owes his good hope, will crown his labours of love with a gratuitous reward; insomuch as "a cup of cold water, given to a disciple, because he belongs to Christ, shall not be forgotten." Thus our adorable Redeemer himself, "for the joy that was set before him," was full of zeal in the work of his heavenly father.

This good hope must be conducive to holiness, because it diminishes the temptations arising from worldly objects. These appear wonderfully great and glorious to the little mind of the natural man: he knows no greater: but what are the most splendid vanities of earth and time, to the eye of faith which penetrates into the unseen world, and beholds objects too big for utterance; compared with which, the dazzling glories of the world die like a dim taper in the blaze of noon. Thus Moses reasoned, and the court of Pharaoh lost all its attractions; hence, even afflictions and reproaches, connected with the "recompense of the reward," became his deliberate choice.

But how good is the effect of this hope under the pressure of calamity! Is the Christian a soldier?—Hope is his helmet; defending his head in the day of battle, till he leaves the field, more than a conqueror, through the love of Jesus. Is the Christian a mariner? Hope is "the anchor of his soul, both sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the veil;" this anchor fixes on the exalted and glorified Jesus, the advocate of believing sinners; and who is, therefore, able to save them to the uttermost. The hope of glory reconciles the suffering Christian to his painful lot; we therefore read, 1 Thess. i. 3, of "*the patience of hope*; because hope makes the possessor of it patient and resigned to all the will of God, believing that "all things work together for good." Hence

the primitive disciples, who “endured a great fight of afflictions, took joyfully the spoiling of their goods.” Why? because “they knew that they had in heaven, a better and an enduring substance”—a substantial treasure prepared for them by divine grace, of which they had already the earnest, and which could never be lost, or taken away from them. This good hope taught St. Paul to reckon all his apostolic sufferings, “light and momentary,” when poised in the scale with “the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” reserved in heaven for him. With this hope, the Christian to use the words of an elegant writer—“greatly disdains to wallow in the puddle of sin. The darts of temptation fall ineffectual to the ground. In danger he is courageous; in sorrow he is moderate; in duty he is diligent; in tribulation he is patient; and even in death he smiles.”

CONCLUSION.—We proposed in the beginning of this discourse, to shew, that *a good hope, through grace, is an invaluable blessing to a Christian, both in life and death.* And who but the infidel doubts this? the *living* infidel I mean; for the dying infidel, with every other dying man, must own its unspeakable value. To obtain this, then, should be the first and chief pursuit of life. And, have we obtained it? Hast *thou*, whose eyes survey, or whose ears listen to this discourse—hast *thou* obtained this good hope?

Permit me to say, that as “salvation is far from the wicked,” so likewise is “the hope of salvation.” What the wicked and the worldly man call hope, is nothing but *presumption*. The sensual sinner, who is living in the lusts of the flesh, can have no scriptural hope of heaven; for, only “the pure in heart, shall see God.” The earthly-minded sinner, whose soul cleaves to the dust, and who embraces the dunghill as his portion, cannot hope for heaven; he must be born again, or he can never see the kingdom of God. In vain the self-righteous pharisee boasts of his hope; his hope is no better than the spider’s web, it will not abide the day of trial. He who hopes in himself, and not in Christ, will be found like the foolish builder, whose house was erected on the yielding sand; when the rain descends, and the winds blow, and the floods come,

the house must fall, and great will be the fall of it. Nor a whit better will the hope of the hypocrite prove, whose religion was only a mask, intended to conceal his beloved sins; the all-searching eye of Christ will penetrate through the thickest disguise, and the holy Judge will say, "Depart from me, I never knew thee, thou worker of iniquity." Almighty God! undeceive these mistaken and presumptuous men! deliver them from their fond delusions! destroy their false hopes; and bring them, as humble penitents to thy feet, that they may obtain forgiving mercy, receive thy sanctifying Spirit, and thus acquire "a good hope through grace!"

Christian! examine thy hope. Is it a good hope? Is the *object* of it good? Yes; it is being with Christ;" and what can be conceived of so good as that? Is the *foundation* of thy hope good? Look well to that. Is it Jesus alone? He is our hope. This is a sure foundation, a tried stone. He that believeth on him shall not be ashamed. Inquire further. Is the *effect* of thy hope good? What influence hath it on thy heart and life? Does it purify thee? Does it make thee thankful? Does it make thee active in duty—firm in temptation—patient in afflictions? These are its proper effects, and where these are found, they are solid evidences of the genuine nature of religious hope.

This hope, so useful and comfortable in life, displays its full value in the article of death. "The righteous hath hope in his death." Then, this good hope is worth a thousand thousand worlds. How many believers, in all ages, have experienced its cordial support, when flesh and heart were failing. They could with perfect composure and satisfaction, commit their departing spirit into the faithful hands of Jesus, saying, "I know whom I have believed; and, when the poor diseased body was about to become a lifeless lump of clay, a wretched mass of corruption, they could say, each one for himself, "I believe in the resurrection of the body." Christ has said, "I will raise it up at the last day." He has promised it, and he will perform it. I quit this "vile body" in hope of "the manifestation of the sons of God;" when it shall be freed from the bondage of corruption;" when Jesus, in



the great day of his triumph, shall change this vile body, and shall make it like unto his own most glorious body ; for them that sleep in Jesus, shall God bring with him. In sure and certain hope of this complete and everlasting salvation, I resign both soul and body into thy faithful hands. Amen.

Such is “ the good hope through grace, which a real Christian is warranted to entertain ; which he glorifies God by entertaining ; and which it should be his daily prayer and endeavour to entertain. To this purpose the apostle exhorts the Hebrews (chap. vi. 11.) “ We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end”—intimating, that a full and complete hope of eternal life is attainable ; and that, ordinarily, it is to be expected only by the diligent Christian, who abounds (ver. 10.) in the labours of love, shewed to the name of Jesus, by ministering to his saints. Relying only on Jesus ; living daily on his fulness ; aiming continually at his glory ; may we abound in this good hope more and more, even to the end of life ; till we “ *inherit the promises*”—till hope be exchanged for the full fruition of all those unspeakable glories which God hath prepared for them that love him.

How oft have sin and Satan strove  
To rend my soul from thee, my God ?  
But everlasting is thy love,  
And Jesus seals it with his blood.

“ Amidst temptations sharp and long  
My soul to this dear refuge flies ;  
Hope is my anchor firm and strong,  
While tempests blow and billows rise.

The Gospel bears my spirits up ;  
A faithful and unchanging God  
Lays the foundation for my hope  
In oaths, and promises, and blood.”

WATTS.

## SERMON LXIV.

### LOOKING UNTO JESUS.

Hebrews xii. 2.....*Looking unto Jesus.*

**T**HIS short sentence comprises the principal business of the Christian life ; for if we are Christians indeed, “ the life which we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God,” and the proper exercise of faith is “ looking to Jesus.”

St. Paul introduces these words for the purpose of encouraging the Hebrew believers in their Christian course. Having, in the former chapter, illustrated the effects of faith by many historical examples, he proceeds to make a practical application of the whole. He would have them consider the ancient worthies, who lived and died in faith, as a numerous cloud of witnesses, spectators of their exertions in the same race ; and, while thus engaged in pressing forwards towards the goal, to keep their eye upon Christ—*looking to Jesus*—looking off from sin, and self, and the world ; from every thing that would retard or dishearten, he would have them keep their eye intent upon the suffering Saviour, who is both “ the author and the finisher of faith.”

My design in the present discourse is to show that believers in Christ are to have a constant and uniform regard to him, in the whole of their Christian walk ; and that this is productive of the most solid advantages. In order to this, I shall show that,

I. Jesus Christ, and him crucified, is the principal object presented to us in the word of God.

II. A constant regard to him, as there revealed, is the first and chief business of the Christian.

III. I shall point out some of the rich advantages which the believer obtains by so doing.

I. Jesus Christ, and him crucified, is the principal object presented to us in the word of God.

The whole Scripture, the Old as well as the New Testament, may be called “ the word of Christ,” which is to

“ dwell in us richly.” Jesus Christ is the substance of the predictions, promises, and ordinances of the most ancient times. We are expressly told, that “ Moses wrote of him ;” that the law had “ a shadow of good things to come ; and that “ the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” The prophets, priests, and kings of old, were types, or emblems of Christ, in his mediatorial offices. Their numerous sacrifices and offerings prefigured that one great sacrifice which he made of himself on the cross, by which he “ put away sin,” and “ brought in everlasting righteousness.” And the more enlightened of the Old Testament saints looked forward to the advent of Christ with faith and delight. Abraham eagerly desired to see “ his day ; and he saw it, and was glad.” Moses prayed, “ I beseech thee show me thy glory,” and was gratified with a view of it. He had such knowledge of the expected Saviour, that “ he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” Isaiah had “ a vision of the Lord of Hosts,” in the temple ; and the New Testament assures us, that it was “ the glory of Christ,” which he saw. The Spirit of Christ, inspiring the prophets, “ testified, before hand, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow ;” and our Lord, when reasoning with two of his disciples after his resurrection, referred to their writings, “ and beginning at Moses and all the prophets (and the psalms) he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.”

It is still more evident that Jesus Christ is the substance of the *Gospel* ; for it is “ the Gospel of Christ.” Preaching the Gospel was originally the same as “ preaching Christ,” or “ preaching the Cross.” Jesus Christ was not the *occasional* subject of the primitive ministry (as of some modern divines, two or three times a year, at particular festivals) but “ *daily*, in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach, and preach Jesus Christ.” And one of these preachers declares his resolution to preach nothing else. “ I am determined,” said he to the Corinthians, “ not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified ;” as if he had said, “ When I came to your great and polite city, where many are fond of refined

speculations, I was resolved not to change my usual method of preaching; I would appear to know and employ myself in making known, nothing among you, but Jesus, as the Messiah; even that crucified person against whom so many scandals are propagated; for I know that though the preaching of the cross be foolishness to them that perish, it is the power of God to them which are saved; I therefore preach and glory in nothing but the cross of Christ."

As the apostles made Christ the subject of their discourses, so was he the substance of that knowledge by which the primitive Christians were distinguished. This is intimated in Ephes. iv. 20, where the apostle urges them to distinguish themselves from the unconverted gentiles by the holiness of their behaviour, as they were so much distinguished from them by their evangelical knowledge. The heathen were sunk in sensuality and profligacy, but saith he—"ye have not so *learned Christ*—seeing ye have heard him, and have been instructed in him, as the truth is in Jesus." This passage shows that Jesus Christ was both the *author* and the *subject* of their religious knowledge; the sum of their learning was "the truth as it is in Jesus;" their teacher was "Christ" himself, by his word and Spirit; and the genuine effect of such learning was, that holiness of character which distinguished them from all persons who were ignorant of the Gospel.

Jesus Christ is so eminently the grand object presented to us in the word, that the doctrine of justification by faith in *him*, is called in Gal. iii. 1. *the truth*. St. Paul, reproving the Galatians for their instability, says, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey *the truth*, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" False teachers, it appears, had perverted their minds as to the great point, the justification of a sinner by Christ alone, and not by the works of the law; and this he calls "*the truth*," because it is the leading, the fundamental truth of the Gospel; and he blames them for departing from it, because they had been properly instructed by the apostles; the Gospel had been faithfully preached to them; and what was it?—"Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth"



by the preaching of the Gospel; and that in so distinct and lively a manner, that it was like the exhibition of Jesus Christ "before their eyes." This Scripture proves our point; it proves that Christ crucified is the prominent object which the Gospel presents to our view. And if it be so, then it will naturally follow in the next place,

II. That a constant regard to him is the first and chief business of the Christian.

The doctrine of "the Gospel is now made known to all nations, for the obedience of faith." This regard to Christ was described even in the predictions of the Old Testament, by the same figurative expression as that in our text—a "looking to Jesus." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," said Jehovah by the prophet Isaiah (Isa. xlv. 22.); where Christ is plainly spoken of as "the Lord our righteousness." And, in chapter xlv. 1. where the calling of the gentiles is predicted, it is written, "I said, Behold me! Behold me! to a nation that was not called by my name." What is this but the genuine language of the Gospel, and which John the har-binger of Christ, actually used, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" No doubt, the faithful, among the Jews, looked further than to the altar, and the victim burning upon it; they who "looked for redemption in Israel," extended their believing views to the great propitiation of the Son of God. For this reason they were commanded, whenever they prayed, in whatever country their lot was cast, to direct their eyes towards the temple at Jerusalem; because that glorious edifice was the type of the infinitely more glorious Redeemer, the temple of the in-dwelling deity, who is the advocate and intercessor of all his believing followers. In like manner, the refractory prophet Jonah, who, having deserted from the appointed duty of going to Nineveh, was cast into the sea and swallowed by a great fish, in the extremity of his distress, uses these words—"Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple"—it was the Saviour, signified by the temple, to whom he directed the eyes of his faith: he looked, and he was delivered. Thus should all distress-

ed sinners act. This is the only safe and certain way of obtaining relief. "I will look," "I will look again, and again, toward thy holy temple." With the encouragement afforded by the Gospel, we may look into heaven itself; yea we may "have boldness to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus." Our Saviour himself interprets the ordinance of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, to which the wounded Israelites look for healing, as a type of himself; for, said he, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Thus he declares himself to be the object presented by the Gospel, and faith in him as a looking upon that object; for he adds, "that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life," Jo. iii. 14, 15. Looking to Jesus, is the only cure for a wounded spirit. This is one of the plainest and most encouraging illustrations of the nature and effect of faith. Faith, strictly speaking, is believing the divine testimony, believing the truth, believing the Gospel. The Gospel presents to our minds Jesus as an all-sufficient Saviour. Faith credits the report of the Gospel concerning him; and in consequence thereof, turns off from every other object of trust and confidence, and looks to Jesus, hoping for mercy, pardon, grace, and everlasting life from him.

That looking to Jesus is the first, the chief business of a Christian, is evident from the scriptural representations of the Christian life. When the Jews asked Christ, "What must we do that we may work the works of God," or perform the most acceptable service to him? he replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent." St. John, speaking of that obedience which is pleasing in his sight, 1 John iii, 22, 23, says, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love on another." Here he makes faith and love the sum of the Christian's duty. The same idea is strongly supported by that expression of St. Paul, in his earnest prayers for the Ephesians (ch. iii. 17.) "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith:" this denotes the most close and intimate friend-

ship, union, and influence ; and this is to be enjoyed in the exercise of faith.

Several of the descriptive names and characters which Christ, for our instruction and comfort, has assumed, confirm this proposition. For instance, he is the “*sun of righteousness*”—the “light of the world”—the “light of life ;” all persons then, but those spiritually blind, prize and rejoice in his light. He is the “*foundation*” which God hath laid in Zion ; no man, taught of God, will presume to lay another ; this is the tried stone, the sure corner stone ; and to them that believe it is precious : on this the believer rests, with confidence, all the weight of his eternal concerns. The same constant regard to him is implied in those places where he is represented as our *food*. He is the “bread of life ;” the bread that came down from heaven ; the bread that secures the everlasting life of him that partakes of it. On this sacred food the believer daily feeds ; it is pleasant as the sweetest bread ; and he is nourished by it unto eternal life. This plain instructive emblem, the Saviour has wisely chosen, and adopted it in the sacrament of his supper ; the observance of this ordinance is one of the distinguishing badges of our belonging to him ; and, while the world continues, will remain a demonstration of that truth for which we plead—that a constant regard to Jesus Christ is the principal duty of the christian life. “Do this in remembrance of me.”

This might be further proved by observing, that such was the regard which the primitive believers had to a crucified Redeemer, that one of them says, 2 Cor. iv. 10. “We always bear about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus.” They carried it about in their memories, in their meditations, in their conversations, and in their conformity to it under their persecutions. *We* also should constantly recollect the death of Jesus ; his wonderful love in dying for us ; the wonderful blessings we derive from his death, and among others, a death unto sin and the world by virtue of it. And this may lead us in the last place,

III. To point out some of the rich advantages which the believer obtains by looking unto Jesus.

The first of these is *peace*—peace with God, and peace in the conscience. True peace comes from God the Father, through the blood of Jesus ; and can only be enjoyed by looking to him. “ Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Those mistaken persons, who, being alarmed on account of their sins, have recourse to their own religious duties, their prayers, their fastings, their charity, and amendment of life ; and hope by these to avert the wrath of God and procure his favour, must be told, that, this is not “ the way of peace.” It is true that duties and reformation are necessary, but not as the means or cause of peace with God ; peace with him is first to be sought as procured by Christ, as proclaimed by the Gospel, and as the free gift of heaven to all who truly believe it : the duties of religion will follow after as the effect follows the cause. Nothing but the blood of Christ can “ purge the conscience ” from guilt, and this can effectually do it ; for such is its divine efficacy, that it “ cleanseth from all sin ; ” and the person who is enabled to put his trust in it, may say, with the holy boldness of St. Paul, “ Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died.”

*Humiliation* is another advantage derived from looking to Jesus. The heart of man is naturally proud ; and will never be effectually humbled, but by a believing contemplation of the greatest example of humility that ever appeared in the world. A representation of the stupendous majesty of the Almighty God, humbled the heart of Job, and obliged him to say, “ Behold I am vile.” A view of the starry heavens induced the psalmist to cry, “ Lord, what is man ! ” But a sight, by faith, of the Son of God, laying aside his glory, stooping to earth, wearing a human body, submitting to poverty, to disgrace, and to death for us, will be the most sovereign remedy against sinful pride. That humiliation, especially, which becomes us as rebellious creatures, will be best promoted by looking at a suffering Saviour, bending under the load of our guilt in the garden and on the cross. Who can make a mock at sin, that beholds the awful severity of God in punishing it in the person of his innocent Son our surety ? Who can be proud, when he sees the Lord of all destitute of a



place where to lay his head ; enduring poverty and shame, and pouring contempt on all the enjoyments of the world, voluntarily resigned for our sakes ?

This also affords the best lesson of *patience* ; and for this purpose, particularly, we are exhorted in the text to look to Jesus ; for, it is added, “ he endured the cross, despising the shame.” Never did the world behold such an example of patience as the Lamb of God, “ who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth : who, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered he threatened not,” but, on the contrary, prayed for his murderers. If we would be Christians indeed, we must “ arm ourselves with the same mind ;” and according to his direction, deny ourselves ; take up our cross, and follow him.”

*Love* is the fulfilling of the law, and the most powerful principle of Gospel holiness. But how shall this be obtained ? We answer, by looking unto Jesus. “ We love him because he first loved us.” “ He loved us, and gave himself for us.” He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood.” “ Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his *friend* ;” but the love of Christ was far greater, for “ when we were yet enemies, Christ died for us.” Now when this love of God our Saviour is “ shed abroad in the heart,” when we have reason to conclude that “ Christ loved us, and gave himself for us,” it cannot but kindle a flame of grateful affection towards him. Of so great importance in true religion is the exercise of love to Christ, that St. Paul pronounces the man to be “ accursed,” who is destitute of it. (1 Cor. xvi, 22.) For the same reason, our Lord thrice repeated to his servant Peter the pathetic question—“ Lovest thou me ?” Happy the man who can answer as he did “ Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee.” This was the generous principle that actuated the first disciples in their extensive labours, and supported them under their heavy trials—“ the love of Christ constrained them.” As far as our christianity is genuine, it will resemble theirs ; and induce us to “ yield ourselves to the Lord ;” and to act, as no longer our own, but his ; bought with a price, and under the strongest obligations “ to perfect holiness, in his fear.”

The love of our brother is closely connected with the love of God ; the former can never exist without the latter, and always accompanies it. Our gracious Lord gave this injunction to his disciples, " This is *my commandment*, that ye love one another, as I have loved you," " His love, when experienced by his followers, would be imitated in their affection for each other ; and for this purpose he condescended to wash their feet on the evening before his passion. In like manner, we are exhorted to be " kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us." Looking to Jesus, the friend of sinners, who came to seek and to save the lost, who went about doing good, and who laid down his life for his enemies, is the most effectual means in the world of curing the selfishness of our hearts, of softening the asperity of our tempers, and of exciting compassion and benevolence in our souls towards all our fellow men.

Looking to Jesus is the best expedient to destroy our inordinate regard to this present world. Christ was dead to it, and separate from it ; and he says to his followers, " *We are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*" The gaudy vanities of earth never attracted the heart of Jesus, nor will they make much impression on us, while we are enabled to keep our eyes on him. St. Paul declares that " by the cross of Christ he was crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him." The more glory we discern in our Lord, the less shall we fancy in the world. It is by looking to him that it becomes, in our esteem, a dead and worthless thing, unfit for our portion, and insufficient for our happiness. A glance of his glory, and a sense of interest in his favour, will make us indifferent alike to its smiles and its frowns ; and all the glittering objects that men pursue with such extreme avidity, will appear as unworthy of our affections, as the painted toys of little children.

There is one more advantage to be expected from looking to Jesus ; an advantage of such magnitude, that we may challenge the universe to equal it, and that is, ability to meet death with calmness and joy. Here is a triumph peculiar to the Gospel ; a triumph far superior to those of kings and conquerors ; a triumph over the king of terrors,

for, "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Dreadful and burdensome beyond description is the terror felt by many, in the anticipation of the fatal hour: and where shall we find a sufficient antidote to the fear of death, but in looking to Jesus? It formed a part of his gracious design in taking flesh and blood, that, "through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage." Looking to Jesus, who has borne the whole of the punishment due to our sins, we are no longer to consider it as *penal*; this is the *sting* of death, which he has extracted; he has rendered this fearful serpent harmless; he has "abolished death;" it is become no longer loss, but gain; no longer an enemy but a friend: hence, thousands of believers in every age of the Church, have met death with a placid smile, and, looking to Jesus, have longed to depart, to be with him.

And thus have we taken a view of what we conceive to be the principal business of the Christian life,—a constant regard to Jesus, as the chief object presented to us in the holy word. Such we are persuaded is the *religion of the New Testament, the religion of Christ*. It cannot be improper for each one to ask himself—"Is this my religion?" In my religion is Jesus "the alpha and the omega, the first and the last?" Is he my teacher, my sacrifice, my Lord? Do I esteem him very highly for his own sake, for his love's sake, for his work's sake? Is he the rock on which I build; the refuge to which I fly; the food on which I live; the fountain in which I wash? And do I, by looking to him, obtain peace within? Does a view of him humble my soul; make me patient; excite my love; open my heart; crucify the world; conquer the fear of death?—Important inquiries! deeply interesting to my eternal safety and welfare!" Happy the man who can say "Thus do I look unto Jesus—and these are the blessed effects."

But a little knowledge of that loose and vague profession of religion which obtains among very many, obliges us to fear that "looking to Jesus" forms little or no part of their christianity; and *what is christianity without Christ?*

A false candour, or, rather, an infidel indifference, leads many persons to say, that neither any particular sentiments nor observances in religion are of any consequence as to future salvation; and that every man is equally right and acceptable to God, who is sincere, who leads a good life and is useful in society.

In answer to this I must say, that the Scripture teaches a very different system; and the Scripture must be our rule, unless we are disposed to renounce christianity. We would not depreciate morality and virtue (would to God we had more of them!) but, to make true religion consist in these, is to subvert altogether the foundation which God has laid. To be a Christian indeed, we must learn an<sup>d</sup> feel our need of Christ as a Saviour, for "the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick:" we must be acquainted with the latire depravity of our fallen nature, and be humbled for it: we must see the necessity of a perfect righteousness, equal to the demands of God's righteous law, and be glad to say, "In the Lord (Jesus) have I righteousness and strength." Sensible of our total inability to save ourselves in whole or in part, we must renounce every pretension to merit; looking to Jesus for wisdom, for righteousness, for holiness, for happiness, and for eternal life; in a word, in the religion of the Gospel, "Christ is all in all!"

Alas! alas! how many live, as St. Paul expresses it, "*without Christ*"—he is not in all their thoughts. Can they be Christians, who never think of him? or they who blaspheme his name? or they who refuse to hear his voice, to read his word, to call upon his name? Can they be Christians, who cherish and practise those very sins, from which he came to deliver his people? Can they be Christians, who know nothing of that chief business of christianity—looking to Jesus? It is most evident, it is most certain they are not, they cannot be Christians. May divine grace convince them how dangerously they are mistaken, and enable them instantly to turn their eyes towards him, who, as yet, waits to be gracious, and rejects none who apply to him for succour. Should this be neglected, how will they bear to behold him, when he shall appear in the glorious dignity of the universal Judge, amidst the



awful grandeur of a blazing world. Then "every eye shall see him." Then they who pierced him, and they who despised and rejected him, will vainly wish that rocks and mountains might crush them to atoms, and prevent the dreadful interview. O sinner! would you then behold the glorious Judge with serenity, now behold the gracious Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. O look to him and be saved, all ye ends of the earth. Look and live.

Fellow Christians! You have need to pray, "Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity." Looking to Jesus will preserve your inward peace, and regulate your outward walk. And thus persevering to the end, death shall not separate you from his love; but "you shall see him for yourselves," and dwell in his presence for ever more. Amen.

## SERMON LXV.

THE HAPPINESS OF BEING WITH CHRIST.

*John xvii. 24.....Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.*

**T**HE discourse of our blessed Saviour to his disciples, and his prayer for them just before his passion, have ever been highly esteemed by the Church of Christ. Melancthon, the reformer, truly said, "There never was heard in heaven or earth a voice more excellent, more holy, more fruitful, more pathetic, than what we have in this prayer." Indeed it is a specimen of that gracious intercession which the Redeemer ever lives to make for us above.

There was a superstitious custom among some Christians in ancient times, which Chrysostome severely reprov'd, of wearing this or some other part of the Gospel of St. John about their necks, as an amulet or preservative from evil; we, however, may make a more rational and effectual use of it, by storing it in our memories, especially if the Holy Spirit condescends to write it upon our

hearts. Much notice is usually taken of the dying words of a great and a good man, especially of a dear friend: these are the words of a dying Saviour, the friend of sinners; whose expressions of affection towards the apostles seemed to become stronger and stronger, as he drew nearer to the close of life. This portion of Scripture therefore deserves our most cordial regard. Let us attend to it with the greatest diligence, that we receive present edification and comfort; and, by treasuring it up in our hearts, find it hereafter a powerful cordial (as thousands before us have found it) on a death-bed; then may we be filled with supreme delight, in the expectation of knowing, by experience, what it is to be with Jesus, and to behold his glory!

In the former part of this chapter, our Lord had prayed for the *preservation*—the *sanctification*—and the union of his people; and here follows his prayer for their *glorification*. Observe this order. The disciples had obtained that knowledge of the Father and of the Son, which is connected with eternal life; ver. 3, 6, 8. He then petitions for their security against the dangers of this evil world; he proceeds to intreat their sanctification through his truth, their separation from wicked men; and here, to crown the whole, he expresses his desire that when they leave the world, they may be “*with him*”---with him, “*where he is*”---and with him there, for the purpose of “*beholding*” and sharing *his glory* in the heavenly state.

Our discourse on these words will consist of a few practical OBSERVATIONS.

1. *It is useful, in all our prayers, to remember that we are addressing a FATHER.*

Our great Intercessor gives us this rule both by his precept and his example. “After this manner,” said he, “pray ye—*Our Father* who art in heaven;” and in this chapter he himself uses the endearing appellation no less than six times: the Holy Spirit is also promised to believers for the purpose of enabling them thus to pray.—“Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” Through the blood of Jesus, a new and living way is opened to the

throne of grace ; so that we are warranted in coming with boldness into the presence of God our heavenly Father, who knoweth our various necessities, and whose parental affection disposes him to supply them. This is to pray “ in faith :” and, as one observes, “ How different are the cries of a malefactor to a judge, from the request of a child to a parent !” This kind of prayer will prevail ; while “ unbelief makes our prayers like a messenger deprived of his hands and feet.”

II. *The singular manner in which this petition of our Lord is expressed.* “ Father, *I will.*” This way of praying is peculiar to Christ, when pleading as the advocate of his people ; and we never find him using this phrase at any other time. Even his most earnest prayers for himself, in the hour of extremity, were in a different style.—“ Nevertheless, *not my will, but thine be done.*” Here, when Christ is pleading for the eternal happiness of his people ; pleading on the ground of that perfect satisfaction he was about to make by his death, he claims, as it were, the happiness which he had even now virtually purchased for them. In this manner are we to conceive of his constant intercession in heaven, as founded on the covenant engagements of his Father and his own meritorious obedience and atonement : for “ if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ *the righteous*—he who is the *propitiation* for our sins.” 1 John ii. 1. This manner of Christ’s praying (“*I will*”) should confirm our faith and increase our confidence in his intercession. The prayer that he makes cannot but be answered, for “ the Father always heareth him.” The legacy that Christ bequeathed, cannot fail of being paid. God is faithful to fulfil all his engagements made with his Son. And though every branch of salvation is a free gift to us, yet it is a matter of justice and equity to Jesus Christ our great surety.

III. *Believers belong to Christ ; they are his by the gift of the Father.* Our Lord speaks of them several times in this chapter as *given* to him ; “ thine they were, and thou gavest them me,” ver. 6, and this is not to be confined to the apostles, for he says, ver. 20. “ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me

through thy word." These are his peculiar people; "chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy," Eph. i. 4; they were given to him in the eternal purpose of God; in the covenant of redemption made with Christ; and they are given to him also when, by the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit by the word, they are *drawn* to him, as it is expressed, John vi. 44. They are given to him "out of the world," ver. 6. they are committed into his hands as the great shepherd of the sheep; are brought into his fold, fed in his pasture, and preserved by him, that they may not perish, but have everlasting life.

IV. *Jesus Christ resides in heaven, and that in behalf of his people.*—"That they may be with me," saith he "*where I am*;" and where that is, none can doubt. It is remarkable that he speaks of himself as there already—"where *I am*;" indeed in his divine nature, he was there and every where, while speaking these words (John iii. 13.) but he speaks thus because he was just about to leave this wretched earth—"and now I am no more in the world;" "and now I come to thee," ver. 11, 13. "I came forth from the Father—again I leave the world, and go to the Father." All this was shortly fulfilled; and the disciples saw him ascend to heaven, Acts, i. 9. There "he appears in the presence of God *for us*;" he appears in the heavenly temple, the true sanctuary, as our high priest, as our great representative, to transact our affairs, to prepare places for us, and, at the time appointed, "to receive us to himself; and to present us faultless before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy."

V. *It is the will of Christ that all his people shall be with him in heaven.* He has a perfect knowledge of every individual—His heart is set upon their happiness—He knows they cannot be completely happy on earth,—and he designs their perfect bliss in heaven.

He perfectly knows each individual; as the good shepherd "he calleth his own sheep by name"—"he knows his sheep"—John x. 3. 14. Even before their conversion his eye is upon them, as he said of many in Corinth before the Gospel was preached to them: "I have much people in this city." As he said of us poor Gentiles, as yet un-



called: "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold: (that is, not of the Jewish fold) them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice." When Saul of Tarsus was called by grace, he ordered his servant Ananias to visit him, directing him to the particular street, and to the very house by name, where he lodged. In like manner he pointed out to Peter, who was his missionary to Cornelius, his residence with Simon a tanner, whose house was by the sea side. Acts ix. 11. and x. 5. Thus, every individual of his people, however mean or obscure, is exactly known to the Saviour, whose "foundation standeth sure, having this inscription—The Lord knoweth them that are his."

The heart of Jesus is set upon the happiness of his people; he has a real, personal, intense love towards each of them; and this is the source of all he has said, and done, and suffered for them. Love brought him down from the throne of glory to the stable, to the workshop; to poverty, to contempt; to the cross, to the grave. His people are "his bride," yea, "his body;" and he loves them more than the most affectionate husband his beloved bride; yea, more than any one loveth his own flesh. How sweetly did he manifest his affection to his disciples when on earth; mean, ignorant, and sometimes mistaken men as they were; nor is his love abated since his glorious exaltation; he has taken a human heart with him to heaven, he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and designs to wipe away all tears from our eyes.

Jesus Christ well knows that believers cannot be completely happy in the present evil world. He knows this world well; for he lived in it himself; he bore the contradiction of sinners in it; and he knows that his followers must expect a similar treatment. The experience of men in all ages proves that all here is "vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit." Complete felicity here is the dream of fools or madmen. The softest nest we can find is not without a thorn. This is not our rest. We have no continuing city here. We are exposed to a thousand temptations. We are liable to a thousand misfortunes; and whatever our outward lot may be, the inward cross, the law of sin in our members, will always embitter our

condition. We are but in our embryo state, as the babe in the womb, the bird in the egg, the butterfly in the chrysalis; it is by death we burst into life; we die to live. O the folly then of clinging to life, or shrinking from death!

VI. *Complete and unceasing happiness will be obtained when we are "with Christ."*

The heavenly state is frequently described by *negatives*—"for it doth not yet appear what we shall be;" not fully, however. But we are so well acquainted with the troubles of life, that deliverance from them is highly desirable; hence it is written "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain:—and there shall be no more curse." This is much: "Blessed," on these accounts, "are the dead which die in the Lord—for they rest from their labours:" but we are not to conceive of heaven only, or chiefly, as a state of exemption from misery; we have here a positive idea of the celestial world, given us by him who came from it; by him who prepares it; by him, in whose presence and glory it consists—"that they may be with me, *where I am.*"

But how shall we form a worthy idea of this happiness? Let us reflect on the happiness which the disciples of our Lord enjoyed in his company on earth, of which we may judge by their sorrow on his leaving them. Grace was poured into his lips. He spake as never man spake. Their hearts burned within them when he expounded the Scriptures. How happy was Mary sitting at his feet! How blessed the penitents who heard him say—"Your sins are forgiven you!" How transported the sick, and the cripples, who possessed health suddenly restored at his word! How grateful the relatives of Lazarus and others brought back from the dead! How happy the apostles, in daily communion with him on their journeys and at their meals, and in receiving unnumbered tokens of his condescending and captivating friendship!

Even now, though Jesus is in heaven, we who believe, enjoy his spiritual presence. "The Lord Jesus be with thy spirit," is an apostolic prayer, constantly fulfilled to his people. It was what he promised—"Where two or three

are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Have we not known the pleasure of communion with him? When we have read his word, when we have heard his gospel, when we have attended his table, when we have poured out our hearts at his feet, when we have lifted up our souls in his praise, have we not been constrained to say, "It is good for us to be here?" and why good? but because Jesus himself was with us.

This is sweet; but to be with Christ must be far better. So St. Paul judged. "For me," said he, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." The apostle was a happy man, for Christ lived in him; he was a contented man, having learned in every state to be satisfied with it; and he was a singularly useful man, for his labours were abundantly blessed. And yet, such were his views of the superior bliss of being "present with the Lord," that he longed to be "absent from the body." What Paul wished for himself, Christ wills for all his people, "that they may be with me," saith he, *where I am*, that is, in heaven; a state of rest, of peace, of holiness, of pleasure, of glory. We have said, that we may form an idea of the happiness of being with Christ in heaven, by knowing something of Christ's being with us upon earth; and yet this affords but a very imperfect knowledge of the matter. The following reasons, however, warrant us to conclude that the presence of Christ will be infinitely satisfying and delightful. There we shall perfectly understand the dignity of his character. On earth his disciples had a very inadequate idea of this, and sometimes, perhaps, their doubts and fears concerning him. We too have very imperfect conceptions of his glory: but there we shall see "the king in his beauty," and commune with him upon his throne.—Our happiness will be uninterrupted. When below, even his apostles were frequently deprived of his company. Many days was he absent from most of them, and spent whole nights in prayer alone. And, alas! how seldom do we enjoy his gracious presence, and how short the seasons of our felicity; but there our enjoyments of his presence will be perpetual and uninterrupted. No persecuting Pharisee, no hypocritical Judas,

no tyrant lust, no ensnaring world, no tempting devil, shall deprive us of his presence for a moment. Another important branch of our happiness will consist in being *like* our Lord. Nothing so much cements friendship as similarity of disposition. To enjoy communion with our Divine Redeemer we must be like him, and the more we are so, the more shall we enjoy of his divine presence. In heaven we shall see him as he is, and be conformed perfectly to his image.—The company of our earthly friends, whom we esteem as great, and wise, and good, is highly gratifying; but the pleasure of being with Christ must be wonderfully enhanced by the consideration of our infinite obligations to him, for his eternal, immense, and unparalleled love and goodness to us. If an unseen Christ is precious to us, we have reason to think that a sight of his lovely and glorious person will fill us with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—Lastly, This felicity will be eternal. When our Lord was upon earth, he often dropt hints of leaving them, “yet a little while, and I go to the Father”—which sometimes made them exceedingly sorrowful. But in heaven will be no more parting, nor even the possibility of it—“We shall be for ever with the Lord.”

VII. *We observe the great end which Christ has in view, in having his people with him—“that they may behold his glory.”*

To “behold” is in Scripture language to enjoy, to participate: “except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God:” that is, he cannot participate or enjoy it. In this we may remark, that mutual happiness is the great object of our Redeemer. It was promised as the reward of his sufferings, that he should “see his seed, that he should prolong his days”—that he should “see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.” Isa. liii. 10, 11. So that Christ himself has a great interest in the happiness of his people, and indeed cannot himself be happy without they are with him, and enjoy the like happiness; “I will,” I desire, I delight, as the word is sometimes used, “that they may behold my glory.” See Matt. xxvii. 43. Mark xii. 33. Luke xx. 46.

Jesus Christ was infinitely glorious from all eternity. We read, ver. 5, of “the glory which he had with the



Father, before the world was ;" but for our sakes he made himself of no reputation (*emptied himself* of all his glory) and assumed human nature in a lowly form, submitting to a life of deep humiliation, and to an ignominious death. Yet, even before his incarnation, he was pleased, occasionally, to afford some resplendent glimpses of his glory. Abraham was indulged with a view of it, for "he saw Christ's day, and was filled with ecstatic joy." Moses, the man of God, earnestly prayed, saying, "I beseech thee show me thy glory," and he was gratified: and we are expressly told, that "Isaiah saw his glory," when he had a vision in the temple, of "*the Lord of hosts.*"

When our Saviour dwelt among men, and appeared in the form of a servant; when carnal eyes, dazzled with worldly splendour, saw no form nor comeliness in him; when, as a man of sorrows, he was despised and rejected of men; even then, the lustre of his glory broke through all the clouds of his humiliation; and believers, whose eyes the Lord had opened, "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The beauty of holiness displayed in his whole character, the divine light that shone in his charming instructions, the heavenly love that glowed in all his benevolent miracles, "manifested forth his glory." He appeared divinely glorious at Jordan; on the mount of transfiguration; and when rising from the tomb. Stephen, and Paul, and John were favoured with a glance of glory on extraordinary occasions.

The state of our Lord, after he had finished his meritorious sufferings on earth, and ascended to heaven, became infinitely glorious. It was according to the plan of redemption that, having "suffered these things, he should enter into his glory;" and the Spirit of Christ in the ancient prophets "testified before hand this sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

But in what more particularly, does this glory consist? 1. His human nature is most glorious: that sacred countenance which once was marred more than any man's, that sacred body which was bruised, broken, and crucified for us, is now brighter and more glorious than the sun; and is become the pattern of what his redeemed shall one

day be; for "he shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body." This now possesses a lustre too brilliant for mortal eyes; for when Jesus presented himself in his glorified state to Saul at his conversion, he was utterly overpowered with the vision; and when the beloved John beheld his glorious appearance in Patmos, "he fell at his feet as one dead."

2. Jesus Christ will appear infinitely glorious in the exercise of his office as mediator; for he continues to exercise this office in heaven, and will continue to do so until all the ransomed are come to glory.

As a *prophet*, he still teaches the whole church, by his holy word and holy Spirit. We are by no means to confine his teaching to the few years he travelled in Judea: millions of humble scholars have been sitting at his feet in all ages; and millions more will succeed, till the whole body of the elect has become wise to salvation.

Inexpressibly great is the glory of Jesus as the great *High Priest* of our Christian profession. We are to conceive of heaven as the true temple, of which that at Jerusalem was merely the type, where our glorious Lord is constantly officiating. By the one sacrifice he offered on the cross, he hath made a full and complete atonement for sin; and now he appears in the most holy place, in the presence of God, to present the merit of his blood, and to secure its application to every one of his people. Here he superintends the cares of the whole church. He raises up, sends forth, and gives success to the ministers of the Gospel; by their instrumentality he still seeks and saves his lost sheep; he exercises compassion and care toward "the ignorant, and them that are out of the way." He feeds his flock like a shepherd, and secures them in his almighty hands, that they may never perish, but have everlasting life.

In heaven, Jesus reigns, the *king* of Zion; he possesses universal authority; angels, men, and devils being subject to his controul. The affairs of the whole universe are under his direction, and are over-ruled to the purposes of his glory. He reigns, and "must reign, till he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and all power—till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

This then is that glory of Christ, which he prays that his people may see. This is a mere glimpse of it, imperfectly caught, by a weak eye, through that glass in which the keenest believer sees but obscurely. Yet this very poor and obscure glance of the glory of Christ may be sufficient to convince us, that to behold it, face to face, must be inconceivably happy; and to make us adopt the Psalmist's pious words, "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness"—the likeness of God in Christ—the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person: this indeed will satisfy the unbounded desire of the human heart, and nothing less than this can suffice.

**IMPROVEMENT.**—From what has been said, we may learn how to form the best idea of heaven of which we are capable in our present state. To be with Christ, and to behold his glory, is a just idea of heaven; it must be so, for it is the idea which Christ himself gives us of it. Let us not then be content to think of heaven as a state of mere exemption from trouble, much less as a place of sensual delight, as Mahomet taught; but as a condition of perfect holiness and supreme felicity in the presence of the lamb, and in the vision of his glory.

And this may also serve to enable us to form some judgment of our state towards God, and whether we are likely to go to heaven when we die. The serious Christian has many an anxious thought on this head; while the presumptuous sinner and the cold formalist seldom entertain a doubt. This subject may be serviceable to both. Does the former love to hear and read and think of Christ? Does he love the place where his honour dwelleth? Is Jesus high in his esteem? Does he delight in beholding the glory of Jesus in the glass of his word? Does he long to behold more and more of it? and does the glance he obtains, transform him in some degree into the same glory? Then he has reason to hope, that he is interested in this prayer; and if so, shall certainly be with him where he is, and behold his glory without a veil.

But, on the other hand, here is nothing to countenance the vain hopes of a carnal man. He who sees no glory in Jesus here, is not in the way to behold it hereafter;

and it is certain, that the person who neglects his Gospel, disregards his word, wilfully is ignorant of his truth, dislikes his people, shuns his ordinances, has never once discerned the glory of the Redeemer. He who loves the sin that Christ abhors, and hates the holiness that Jesus loves, cannot, in this state, entertain any scriptural hope of heaven. No, he must be washed; he must be justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus; he must be sanctified by the Spirit of our God, or he can never enter into the kingdom of glory. The persons described in this chapter, as those for whom Christ prays, and wishes to be with him, are such as know him—to whom God's name and nature are manifested—who are not of the world—who are sanctified by the truth. Is this then *our* character? If not, our hope of glory is mere presumption.

We may infer from this prayer of Christ *the safety of all those who believe in him*. It appears that the heart of Christ is fully set upon the happiness of his people, "*I will*," saith he, "that they may be with me." Now, does Jesus, who hath almighty power *will* this? Who then shall prevent it. Who shall resist his will? Is there any power in heaven, or earth, or hell, superier to his? If this be his will, it shall be accomplished; for what can prevent it? His love is unchangeable; his purpose unalterable; his engagements must be fulfilled. Let believers then be ashamed of their doubts and fears. Let them rely upon his promises; let them confide in his faithfulness; let them gladly join St. Paul, and say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able (and we may add, *determined* too) to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

This representation of the love of Christ is well calculated to excite our love to him. After having laid down his life for us, after ascending into heaven for us, after having called us by his grace, he pleads for our company, and will not be satisfied without having us with him. O what marvellous love is this! and surely it demands a return of affection to him. Can we do any thing for him on earth? Let us do it gladly. Can we suffer any thing for him below? Let us bear it joyfully. And let us not cleave to the earth too much. If he wills that we should be with



him, is it not fit that we should be willing, yea desirous of leaving all for that purpose.

Finally. This subject throws a wonderful lustre over the glooms of death and the grave. Dark as they are in themselves, and dreadful to nature, the sun of righteousness, rising, dispels the threatening clouds, and gilds the darksome scene. With that view of the matter, to which the Lord of life directs us in the text, what is death? Not a horrid monster, the cruel executioner of the broken law, threatening to thrust our reluctant spirits into the prison of hell; but the mild and gentle messenger of our Saviour, who says, "The prayer of Jesus is fulfilled: my master has long wished for your company, and the time appointed is arrived: shut your eyes upon the fading glories of the world, and open them upon the glory of the incarnate God your beloved Saviour above, who waits to receive you to himself, that where he is, you may be also."

And this should moderate our desire of life, and prevent our fear of death; so should it make us sober and resigned when we pray for the recovery of the pious sick. It is lawful, with submission to the divine pleasure, to intreat the continuance of desirable and useful lives: but we should not be too anxious, lest our petitions should clash with those of our Saviour, who prays they may be with *him*, while we are so earnest that they may be with *us*. This too, should keep us from sorrowing, as those without hope, on account of departed believers. They are with the Lord, where he wished them to be, and where they are infinitely happy. They are far happier than ourselves. We live by faith; they by sight. We see through a glass darkly; they see face to face. We catch a glance of the glory of Christ; they see it steadily, openly, unceasingly. We are transformed in some measure (and O in what a small measure) they are perfectly like him, for they "see him as he is." May divine mercy, in the fittest time, fulfil this prayer of Christ for each of us, that "we may be with him, where he is, and behold his glory." Amen and Amen!











